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THE RESPONSIBLE CRITIC:

OR THE FUNCTION OF CRITICISM AT ANY TIME

ESSAYS IN CRITICISM, one gathered at the outset, was to be, in a positive way, a criticism of *Scrutiny*. *Scrutiny* was lacking in scholarship: the new quarterly from Oxford would show us how a critical vigour not inferior to *Scrutiny's* might, as it should, be combined with true scholarly precision. How many of the readers of *Essays in Criticism*—or of the Editorial Board—judge that intention to have been realized I do not know, and I shall not, perhaps, be taken for an impartial observer; but I can only, with a whole and very regretful sincerity, report that we have not as a matter of fact felt ourselves challenged or rivalled by *Essays in Criticism*; that we have not at any time found its pages characterized by such notable examples of scholarly or critical or scholarly-critical practice as might call forth the blush of shame and stimulate us to higher endeavours; and that we should have supposed the formulators of the initial pretension themselves not unready to wonder whether *Essays in Criticism* has yet begun to teach the lessons, and provide the high pattern, aimed at.

And here perhaps I point to the significance of the long statement of position and elaboration of programme contributed to the issue for January this year by the Editor, Mr. F. W. Bateson, under the heading, *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time*. Mr. Bateson surveys the varieties, as he sees them, of contemporary critical practice, tells us what is wrong with each, and at the same time gives us his account of the right performance of the function of criticism—the ideal to which we are to regard *Essays in Criticism* as henceforward dedicated. This account, in its confused and confusing largenesses, might not have been altogether easy to comment on if Mr. Bateson had not done some demonstrating. The demonstrating shows us—it shows us decisively—what that 'discipline of contextual reading', which as expounded strikes us so disconcertingly as both the progeny and the destined progenitor of confusion and misconception, in effect means; there is no reason for not pronouncing bluntly on it.

The observations from which Mr. Bateson starts are that we may be too precipitate in supposing ourselves in a position to judge a poem, and that sometimes some scholarly knowledge may be necessary. The first (its truth is signally exemplified in Mr. Bateson's own practice) may be freely granted, and the second, stated with that generality, will not be disputed. I am thus guarded in respect of the second because experience has taught me that, when it is invoked, one needs to inquire into the intention. This

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may very well be of the kind represented by Miss Rosamond Tuve, whose books were discussed by R. G. Cox in the last issue of *Scrutiny*. Those books illustrate the spirit of a scholarship that, whatever it professes (and even believes), is inimical to criticism, that is, to intelligence.

I do not like, let me say at this point (it seems a fitting one), the way in which scholarship is commonly set over against criticism, as a thing separate and distinct from this, its distinctive nature being to cultivate the virtue of accuracy—it is a way I had occasion to object to in an exchange with Mr. Bateson some eighteen years ago. Accuracy is a matter of relevance, and how in the literary field, in any delicate issue, can one hope to be duly relevant—can one hope to achieve the due pointedness and precision of relevance —without being intelligent about literature? Again, how does one acquire the necessary scholarly knowledge? Some of the most essential can be got only through much intelligent reading of the literary-critical kind, the kind trained in 'practical criticism': in the interpretation and judgment, that is, of poems (say) where it can be assumed that the text, duly pondered, will yield its meaning and value to an adequate intelligence and sensibility. Such intelligent reading, directed upon the poetry of the seventeenth century, cannot fail to be aware of period peculiarities of idiom, linguistic usage, convention, and so on, and of the need, here, there and elsewhere, for special knowledge.

The most important kind of knowledge will be acquired in the cultivation of the poetry of the period, and of other periods, with the literary critic's intelligence. Miss Tuve's insistence on an immense apparatus of scholarship before one can read intelligently or judge is characteristic of the academic over-emphasis on scholarly knowledge; it accompanies a clear lack of acquaintance with intelligent critical reading. And of so extravagant an elaboration of 'contextual' procedures as Mr. Bateson commits himself to one would even without the conclusive exemplifying he does for us, have ventured, with some confidence, that the 'contextual' critic would not only intrude a vast deal of critical irrelevance on his poem; he would show a marked lack of concern for the most essential kinds of knowledge.

The astonishing manifestations of irresponsibility (to take over the offered word from Mr. Bateson) that he actually achieves, however, could hardly have been divined. I will deal with the instances in which he undertakes to correct myself. And I start by noting what I had to note when I had my first exchange with him all those years ago, and have had to note again in the interval: in framing his charges of default of the scholar's trained and delicate scruple he displays something strikingly other than scrupulousness in presenting the alleged defaulter.

> 'The implications and ramifications of context can be best demonstrated by a concrete example. A good one can be found on p. 74 of *Revaluation*, where Leavis has printed side by side four lines of Marvell (from 'A Dialogue between the Soul and Body'):

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A Soul hung up, as 'twere, in Chains
Of Nerves, and Arteries, and Veins.
Tortur'd, besides each other part,
In a vain Head, and double Heart

and four lines by Pope (*Dunciad* IV, 501-4):

First slave to Words, then vassal to a Name,
Then dupe to Party; child and man the same;
Bounded by Nature, narrow'd still by Art,
A trifling head, and a contracted heart.

'Leavis's point is the "affinities" between the two passages. It is part of his case that Pope's "wit" represents a continuation of the Metaphysical tradition. Whatever the merits of the general thesis, it receives no support from these lines, since the "affinities" only exist within a verbal context of meaning. The verbal similarity between the last line of each passage is, of course, striking and obvious. But Leavis makes the collocation in order to establish a resemblance between Marvell's and Pope's poetic styles, and once the matter is raised to a stylistic context the "affinities" disappear'.

It turns out that once a matter is raised to a stylistic context by Mr. Bateson most of the things that concern a literary critic are likely to disappear; but perhaps it is worth my pointing out that the 'resemblance' discussed in those pages of *Revaluation* is a very different matter from what Mr. Bateson suggests: I take some trouble to make plain that it is a matter neither of the Metaphysical tradition nor of the verbal similarity between the last lines of the passages from Marvell and Pope. If the reader looks at page 74 of *Revaluation* he will find, immediately after the piece of Pope reproduced by Mr. Bateson, this:

'But such particularity of resemblance may hinder as much as help; it may be better to adduce something as insistently unlike anything Pope could have written as King's

'Tis true, with shame and grief I yield,
Thou like the Vann first took'st the field
And gotten hast the victory
In thus adventuring to dy
Before me, whose more years might crave
A just precedence in the grave.

A certain crisp precision of statement, a poised urbanity of movement and tone, that relates this passage to the other two becomes very apparent in the last line. The effect is as of an implicit reference, even here in King where personal feeling is so indubitably strong, of the immediate feeling and emotion to a considered scale of values—a kind of critical "placing", as it were'.

That last sentence, with its carefully related words and phrases, associating mode of 'statement' with 'movement' and 'tone', defines

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well enough, I think, in relation to the *three* quoted passages, the qualities upon which I wanted to focus attention. What, in fact, I am doing is to develop the proposition that immediately precedes, in *Revaluation* (see the bottom of page 73), the passage quoted from Marvell:

> 'It is, then, plain enough that Pope's reconciliation of Metaphysical wit with the Polite has antecedents'.

I am indicating the way back from Pope to Ben Jonson, and if Mr. Bateson had thought the whole presented case worth attending to he might have been led to observe in Marvell some marked antecedents of the Augustan to which 'the implications and ramifications of context' leave him blind.

It is depressing when one's immense pains to be precise in observation and delicately firm in thought go so unrewarded, but in justice to Mr. Bateson I have to admit that what I complain of is as nothing, measured by the treatment he accords Marvell and Pope. It is at their expense that he confounds me. This is the way in which he demonstrates how completely wrong I am:

> 'In terms of literary tradition the meanings of "head" and "heart" are demonstrably quite different in the two passages. In Marvell's lines the vivid images of the first couplet almost compel the reader to visualize the torture-chambers of the "vain Head, and double Heart". It is the kind of allegory that was popularized in the early seventeenth century by the Emblem Books, in which a more or less conventional concept is dressed up in some striking new clothes, the new clothes being the real *raison d'être*. In Pope's last line, however, the abstract or quasi-abstract words which lead up to it make it almost impossible to *see* either the "trifling head" or the "contracted heart". Obviously Pope's "head" and "heart" belong to the same order of reality as his "Nature" and "Art". They are simply items in his psychological terminology, one the antithetical opposite of the other, and their modern equivalents would, I suppose, be the intellect and the emotions. Nothing could be further removed than these grey abstractions from Marvell's picture-language.
>
> 'So far the analysis of the two passages has been verbal and stylistic. The apparent verbal identity is, as I have shown, contradicted by the very different figures of speech and stylistic conventions employed by the two poets'.

But Mr. Bateson has shown nothing at all. What he has asserted about the 'very different figures of speech and stylistic conventions employed by the two poets' he has merely asserted; and it can, by anyone who *reads* Marvell's poem (to take that first), immediately be seen to be in great part false. Here is the whole first speech of *A Dialogue between the Soul and Body*:

> O who shall, from this Dungeon, raise
> A Soul inslav'd so many wayes?
> With bolts of Bones, that fetter'd stands

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In Feet, and manacled in Hands.
Here blinded with an Eye; and there
Deaf with the drumming of an Ear.
A Soul hung up, as 'twere, in Chains
Of Nerves, and Arteries, and Veins.
Tortur'd, besides each other part,
In a vain Head, and double Heart.

There is undoubtedly some 'vivid', that is (to avoid the visual suggestion) potent, imagery here; but can Mr. Bateson describe what he *sees* in response to Marvell's 'picture-language'? Can he, in fact, give any account of the poem that will begin to make the expression, 'picture-language', anything but disconcertingly inappropriate? Can he suggest what picture *could* be drawn of the Soul 'inslav'd' in the dungeon of the body in *any* of the 'many ways' against which it protests?

None *could* be that bore any relation to Marvell's poem, which is an utterly different thing from what Mr. Bateson says it is. Of its very nature it eludes, defies and transcends visualization. So one is surprised to be told, by a scholar (who should know these things), that it is 'the kind of allegory that was popularized in the early seventeenth century by the Emblem Books'. To call it an allegory at all can only mislead, and to say, as Mr. Bateson does, that it 'dresses up' a 'more or less conventional concept' in some 'new clothes' (these being the 'real *raison d'être*') is to convey the opposite of the truth about it. For it is a profoundly critical and inquiring poem, devoted to some subtle exploratory thinking, and to the *questioning* of 'conventional concepts' and current habits of mind.

The paradoxes with which it opens may not be unrelated to convention, but that undoubted force which so strikes Mr. Bateson (though he hasn't bothered with significance) is not in the least a matter of their compelling us to *visualize* anything; it is that they are paradoxes the essence of which is to elude or defy visualization.

With bolts of bones, that fetter'd stands
In Feet, and manacled in Hands.

—How do we see the Soul? What visual images correspond to 'fetter'd' and 'manacled'? We certainly don't see manacles on the Soul's hands and fetters on its feet: the Soul's hands and feet are the Body's, and it is the fact that they *are* the Body's that makes them 'manacles' and 'fetters'. No doubt there is in every reader's response to those words some kind of visual element; but the reader for whom the response is in any major way a matter of *seeing* manacles and fetters has not adjusted himself to the poem. Reading this rightly, we feel, as something more than stated, the Soul's protest (paradoxically in part physical—this is where 'imagery' comes in) against the so intimately and inescapably associated matter: the introductory 'with bolts of bones' makes the antithesis, Soul and Body, seem clear and sharp.

In the next couplet Mr. Bateson himself can hardly have explained the effect as a matter of our being made to visualize:

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Here blinded with an Eye; and there
Deaf with the drumming of an Ear.

The Soul is protesting against the conditions and limitations of life in a world of sense-experience. And the eye is a physical organism —it can be pulled out; and a diagram can be drawn of the ear. But the antithesis, Soul and Body, has lost some of the sharpness it had when the Body was represented by 'bolts of bones'. This development is confirmed by what follows. The comment on

A Soul hung up, as 'twere, in Chains
Of Nerves, and Arteries, and Veins

is made by the Body when it, in turn, speaks. The effect of these lines is immediate, and it is one concerning which we can say that we certainly do not *see* the Soul hanging in its 'Chains'. And when we come to the 'vain Head' and 'double Heart' it takes the wit of 'double' to remind us that the heart (and the head too) can be thought of as a mere physical part of the material body. We don't, with that reminder, see them, or think of them, as 'torture-chambers'; it is not in them as 'torture-chambers' that the Soul is tortured, and Mr. Bateson's criticism derives from a striking failure of attention: 'In Marvell's lines the image has run away with the antithesis (it doesn't really matter whether the torture-chamber is the head or the heart or some other part of the body) . . .'

The poem offers no such simple scheme as he supposes. It is devoted to exploring a sense of the relation between 'soul' and 'body' that couldn't have been expressed in any simple scheme—emblematic, allegorical, diagrammatic, or what. The 'vain Head' and the 'double Heart', though they stand here for the Body, are clearly not just the physical part and the muscular organ. And this is not inadvertence, or slackness of grasp, in Marvell, whatever Mr. Bateson may be inclined to suggest (he writes of a 'half-realization [in Marvell's *Dialogue*] that his medium was on its last legs and could no longer be taken with complete seriousness'). When the Body speaks we have this:

O who shall me deliver whole
From bonds of this Tyrannic Soul?
Which, stretcht upright, impales me so,
That mine own Precipice I go . .

Will Mr. Bateson say that he finds himself compelled to visualize the Soul 'stretcht upright' and 'impaling' the Body? Hardly. What is conveyed with such power here is the Body's sense of the perilous game that, in its erect posture, it plays with gravity.[1] The passage answers (concave to convex, as it were) to that in which the Soul

[1] 'After he was stretch'd to such an height in his own fancy, that he could not look down from top to toe but his eyes dazled at the Precipice of his Stature'. *Rehearsal Transpros'd* i. 64 (Quoted in the Commentary to the Poems, edited by Margoliouth).

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speaks of being hung up in chains—a passage that expresses a sense of the inseparable, indistinguishable, implication of life in 'nerves and arteries and veins'. It wouldn't, the comment came as one read, have been 'hung up' if life had not informed the nerves and arteries and veins, and made them more than a material network. And now, as one reads, the comment comes that the conditions against which the Body protests are those which make it a body. It is a comment that is insisted on by what follows:

> And warms and moves this needless Frame:
> (A Fever could but do the same).

A Frame that has lost its warmth, its power of motion and its needs is on the way to becoming a 'kneaded clod'.

> And, wanting where its spight to try,
> Has made me live to let me dye.

—The Body (as Claudio testifies), having acquired its needs and become a body, cannot want to become 'needless'.

> A Body that could never rest,
> Since this ill Spirit it possest.

—To 'rest' would be to die, which the Body, of its very nature, cannot wish to do. What it rebels against is the state, entailed in its state of being a body, of needing to fear death: 'mine own Precipice I go'—the point is now made with fuller significance.

A body that fears to die, and has to fear to die because it has been made to live by the Soul, is not so readily to be set over against the soul, as something clearly distinguished, as the title of the poem seems to imply. And that is the point of the poem. The succeeding speech of the Soul develops it:

> What Magick could me thus confine
> Within another's Grief to pine?
> Where whatsover it complain,
> I feel, that cannot feel, the pain.
> And all my Care its self employs,
> That to preserve, which me destroys:
> Constrain'd not only to indure
> Diseases, but, what's worse, the Cure:
> And ready oft the Port to gain,
> Am Shipwrackt into Health again.

The Body's ills may be the Body's, but 'I feel, that cannot feel, the pain': the other's 'Grief' is equally the Soul's, for all the distinction that has been stated as an antithesis. I need not comment on the rest of the speech—except, perhaps, to ask how much picture-language Mr. Bateson finds even in the closing couplet of it. The Body's counterpart of this speech concludes the poem:

> But Physick yet could never reach
> The Maladies Thou me dost teach;

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Whom first the Cramp of Hope does Tear:
And then the Palsie Shakes of Fear.
The Pestilence of Love does heat:
Or Hatred's hidden Ulcer eat.
Joy's chearful Madness does perplex:
Or Sorrow's other Madness vex.
Which Knowledge forces me to know;
And Memory will not forego.
What but a Soul could have the wit
To build me up for Sin so fit?
So Architects do square and hew,
Green Trees that in the Forest grew.

The maladies of the Soul—described as that because they are of the kind that Physick cannot reach—are equally the Body's. The Body is exposed, it says, to suffering them by Knowledge and Memory, which it speaks of as belonging to the Soul, but which are nevertheless sufficiently of the Body to involve the Body in maladies.

I am not suggesting that Marvell rejected the distinction between the soul and the body. But, plainly, this poem has for theme the *difficulty* of the distinction—its elusiveness; it explores with remarkable originality and power the perplexities and problems that, for one bent on distinguishing, must, in concrete experience, be found to lie behind the distinction as conventionally assumed—as assumed, for instance, by an allegorical or emblematic writer. I will not here go into the significance of the closing couplet (I confess, indeed, that I have not wholly convinced myself with any account of the development that, with its curiously satisfying effect as of a resolution, it gives to the theme). The poem is among Marvell's supreme things, profoundly original and a proof of genius; and my notes on its not unobvious (I should have thought) characteristics are enough to bring out the remarkable nature of Mr. Bateson's feat. Of this poem he can say: 'It is the kind of allegory that was popularized in the early seventeenth century by the Emblem Books, in which a more or less conventional concept is dressed up in some striking new clothes, the new clothes being the *raison d'être*'. With his eyes (presumably) on it he can tell us:

> 'There is an obvious connection between Marvell's metaphors and the analogical thinking of the Tudor and Stuart divines. Hooker, for example, uses the regularity of the motions of the heavenly bodies as an argument for imposing ecclesiastical law upon the Puritans.)'

How can we explain such a performance? Can it be said that the critic who can tell us, with this serene assurance, these things about such a poem has, in any serious sense of the verb, ***read*** it? And Mr. Bateson tells us them in a considered pronunciatory essay in which he offers to expose the irresponsibility of other critics, and to show us how we may achieve precision, and a

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certitude of correctness, in analysis, interpretation and judgment. What makes the performance the more astonishing is that he circulated the essay, he tells us, among his editorial colleagues (the note on the Editorial Board in front of *Essays in Criticism* lists eight) before publishing it. Is it possible that none of them made any remark on the extraordinary aberrations I have adduced?

But the essay contains much more, of various kinds, that is equally matter for wonder, and seems equally to have escaped remark from Mr. Bateson's colleagues. He treats Pope, for instance, with as confident and dumbfounding an arbitrariness as that which Marvell suffers:

> 'In Marvell's lines the image has run away with the antithesis (it doesn't really matter whether the torture-chamber is in the head or the heart or some other part of the body), whereas in Pope's lines the concept has almost killed the imagery, the progress being towards a mathematical purity with the sensuous elements segregated into a separate compartment of their own. And there is a still further contradiction. The most interesting feature in the lines is that the Metaphysical style in which he was writing has *forced* Marvell to say what he cannot have wanted to say. And Pope's Augustan style has forced his hand in the same way.
>
> 'Marvell's poem is a thoroughly serious affair, but the vividness of the imagery has resulted in a blurring of the argument by making it impossible for the reader not to equate—or, indeed, in terms of the poetic impact, *subordinate*—the immoral head and heart with such relatively innocent and secondary members as the nerves, arteries and veins. So gross a breach of the poem's logic cannot possibly have been intended by Marvell. The passage from the *Dunciad* raises a similar problem. How is it Pope, a master of language if ever there was one, has used his concrete terms with so little precision? In these lines "slave", "vassal" and "dupe" are virtually interchangeable. And so are "Bounded", "narrow'd" and "contracted". These tautologies can't have been *meant* by Pope'.

Mr. Bateson's ability to believe, and judicially to pronounce, that Marvell has been guilty of a 'breach of the poem's logic' such as 'cannot possibly have been intended' goes, we have seen, with his decision that Marvell shall have intended what, on the unequivocal and final evidence of the poem itself, he clearly didn't—the poem offers not the faintest ghost of a ground for the belief, which wholly denatures it. Mr. Bateson's confidence that Pope can't have meant what *he* wrote exposes itself immediately, in what stands there on Mr. Bateson's page, for the purely gratuitous achievement it is—exposes itself at the first cursory reading, one would have thought, by what within the compass of a single glance it commits Mr. Bateson to (and again one can't help wondering that none, apparently, of his editorial colleagues should have brought so

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disastrous and undeniable a fact to his notice). What he brands 'tautologies' are obviously not tautologies, and it is not Pope ('a master of languages if ever there was one') who has shown himself, in respect of precision in the use of words, astonishingly indifferent. Here again are the four lines of Pope:

> First slave to words, then vassal to a Name,
> Then dupe to Party; child and man the same;
> Bounded by Nature, narrow'd still by Art,
> A trifling head, and a contracted heart.

How can Mr. Bateson so have anaesthetized himself as to be able to pronounce 'slave', 'vassal' and 'dupe' 'virtually interchangeable'? That the forces of these words should have something in common is essential to the intention: 'child and man the same'. But that the forces are different, and that each word has a felicity in its place, is surely apparent at once, without analysis. What analysis yields I need only briefly indicate.

Words should be servants—the servants of thought and of the thinker; the badly educated child is made a 'slave to words' (the cliché has point, as clichés usually have). Such a child, grown to political years, naturally becomes 'vassal to a Name'. The felicity of this expression takes us beyond cliché (the 'mastery of language' shown here is characteristic of Pope): the relation of personal subservience to a great patrician name (and a 'mere name', it is suggested)—a relation substituting for service of Principle[2]—is with special point described contemptuously by the feudal term in an age in which feudalism is Gothick. And such an initiate into politics, expecting his reward for faithful service of Party, finds himself a 'dupe': he has been used, but can command no substantial recognition from 'Int'rest that waves on parti-colour'd wings'. 'Vassal' and 'dupe' express quite different relations, and a moment's thought will show that they couldn't be interchanged. And neither noun could go with 'words': 'vassal' expresses a relation between persons, and 'dupe' implies an exploiting agent. There is hardly any need to argue that 'slave' could not, without loss or point, as these words stand, be substituted for 'vassal' or 'dupe'. And since 'slave to words' is something of a cliché, the progression 'slave', 'vassal', 'dupe', gives us a climax.

As for Mr. Bateson's assertion that 'Bounded', 'narrow'd', and 'contracted' are tautologies, that need not take us long. 'Bounded by Nature'—this refers to the limitations imposed by innate constitution. The person thus limited is made 'by Art'—*i.e.* by education—even more limited than he need have been: any-

[2] *Cf.* Twenty lines further on:

> 'A Feather, shooting from another's head,
> Extracts his brain; and Principle is fled;
> Lost is his God, his country, everything
> And nothing left but Homage to a King.

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one who *reads* the passage can see that 'bounded' and 'narrow'd' are *not* interchangeable (and that 'virtually' doesn't help Mr. Bateson's case). And if Pope had described the heart as 'bounded' or 'narrow'd'—but clearly he couldn't have done that. If, then, he had *not* described it as 'contracted' he would have forgone a marked felicity. 'Contracted'—which picks up 'trifling' alliteratively, with a gain of expressive value for both terms—has something like the effect of 'double' in Marvell's 'vain Head and double Heart': it keeps us in touch with the heart as a physical organ. It suggests the muscular contraction, though *this* contractedness is permanent, and not part of the vital rhythm; and the presence of the muscular effect gives to the evoking of life meanly constricted a force that it wouldn't otherwise have had.

There are wider and more varied possibilities of imagery than Mr. Bateson would have seem to have supposed. And he clearly assumes a naïve account of the pair, concrete-abstract, as a simple antithesis. I cannot help thinking that if he had concentrated his attention on reading Pope's poetry he would have got a better understanding of those changes in the English language which marked the later part of the seventeenth century than he has derived from all his exercises in 'the discipline of contextual reading'. He might certainly have learnt something about the possibilities of 'abstract' diction in poetry, and, going on to Johnson, might have discovered that there may be concreteness and imagery in verse that is wholly Augustan in idiom, convention and way of using language. As it is he can tell us, with that impressive poise of the contextually responsible critic, such absurdities as this: 'by his infusion of the Picturesque (the object of his thefts from the Metaphysical poets) Pope was able to mitigate to some extent the abstractness of his medium'. The changes in civilization that can be studied in the poetry of Dryden, Pope and Johnson are indeed of great interest. But Mr. Bateson tells us little about them when he tells us—as any first-term undergraduate can be relied on to—that 'the abstract character of Pope's diction can be related without difficulty to the philosophies of Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume'.

Mr. Bateson, however, goes on:

> 'But this intellectual context, important though it certainly is for understanding Marvell and Pope, does not seem to provide the ultimate framework of reference within which their poems need to be read. Behind the intellectual context lies a complex of religious, political and economic factors that can be called the social context. As this level of meaning seems to be the final context of which the critical reader of literature must retain an awareness, it will be worth while trying to summarize, however baldly, the social context implicit in these two passages'.

In spite of the defensive 'however baldly', it is impossible not to comment severely on the gratuitousness, the flimsy and fanciful arbitrariness, of what Mr. Bateson then offers us as summaries of the implicit 'social contexts' (and his 'social' is a term we need to

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note). I don't know whether he has read the parts of Harold Smith's work that have appeared in *Scrutiny* over the past eighteen months—parts of an inquiry into the cultural changes manifested in the language and conventions of poetry during the period in question, but if he wants to expound the 'intellectual context' and the 'complex of religious, political and economic factors' that lie behind it, he can't do better than go to Smith for light. Smith has a full sense of the complexities, is delicate and precise in formulation, and never loses his grasp of the fact that the poetry is both the focus of his inquiry and of unique value as evidence.

And here we come to the sad truth about Mr. Bateson's discipline of contextual reading. 'What general conclusions', he pleasantly asks, 'can be drawn from this analysis of the two passages quoted by Leavis?' Mr. Bateson draws conclusions of decided largeness; but, of course, none that are valid *can* be drawn, since the 'analysis' ignores the passages. And—what we have now to note—the consequences of this last fact is that his discipline is not merely irrelevant; it isn't, and can't be, a discipline at all: it has no determinate enough field or aim. That he shouldn't notice, or be embarrassed by, this disability is characteristic of his whole project; the indeterminateness makes possible (for Mr. Bateson—and, apparently, his colleagues, or most of them) the confident ambition of the project, and the remarkable pretension that (as we shall see) crowns it.

He starts from the commonplace observation that a poem is in some way related to the world in which it was written. He arrives by a jump (at least, his arrival there is not by any steps of sober reasoning) at the assumption that the way to achieve the correct reading of a poem—of say, Marvell's or Pope's—is to put it back in its 'total context' in that world. No idea of such an undertaking troubles the reader whose attention is really and intelligently focussed upon the poem, and if the undertaking were proposed to him he would see its absurdity at once. He would see that it was gratuitous, and worse; and at the same time he would see that any achievement corresponding to it is impossible—that the aim, in fact, is illusory. What *is* this 'complex of religious, political and economic factors that can be called the social context', and the reconstruction of which enables us (according to Mr. Bateson) to achieve the 'correct reading', 'the object as in itself it really is, since it is the product of progressive corrections at each stage of the contextual series'. How does one set to work to arrive at this final inclusive context, the establishment of which puts the poem back in 'its original historical setting', so that 'the human experience in it begins to be realized and re-enacted by the reader'? Mr. Bateson doesn't tell us, and doesn't begin to consider the problem. He merely follows up those plainly false assertions about the passage of Marvell and Pope with some random notes from his historical reading.

That is all he *could* do. And all he could do more would be to go on doing that more voluminously and industriously. For

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the total 'social context' that he postulates is an illusion. And so it would have been, even if he had started by reading the poem. But he would then—at least, if he had really *read* the poem, and kept himself focussed upon that—have seen that in the poem, whatever minor difficulties of convention and language it might present, he had something determinate—something indubitably *there*. But 'context', as something determinate, is, and can be, nothing but his postulate; the wider he goes in his ambition to construct it from his reading in the period, the more is it *his* construction (in so far as he produces anything more than a mass of heterogeneous information alleged to be relevant.).

It will not, I think, be supposed that I should like to insulate literature for study, in some pure realm of 'literary values' (whatever *they* might be). But on the one hand it is plain to me that no poem we have any chance of being able to read as a poem requires anything approaching the inordinate apparatus of 'contextual' aids to interpretation that Mr. Bateson sees himself deploying. On the other hand it is equally plain to me that it is to creative literature, read *as* creative literature, that we must look for our main insights into those characteristics of the 'social context' (to adopt for a moment Mr. Bateson's insidious adjective) that matter most to the critic—to the reader of poetry.

I do indeed (as I have explained in some detail elsewhere) think that the study of literature should be associated with extra-literary studies. But to make literary criticism *dependent* on the extra-literary studies (or to aim at doing so, for it can't be done) in the way Mr. Bateson proposes is to stultify the former and deprive the latter of the special profit they might have for the literary student. To suggest that their *purpose* should be to reconstruct a postulated 'social context' that once enclosed the poem and gave it its meaning is to set the student after something that no study of history, social, economic, political, intellectual, religious, can yield. The poem as I've said, is a determinate thing; it is *there*; but there is nothing to correspond—nothing answering to Mr. Bateson's 'social context' that can be set over against the poem, or induced to re-establish itself round it as a kind of framework or completion, and there never *was* anything. The student who sets out in quest of such a 'context' may read historical works of various kinds and he may assemble a number of general considerations such as Mr. Bateson offers us as explaining why Marvell has been 'forced to say what he cannot have wanted to say', but he will find that the kind of 'context' that expands indeterminately as he gets from his authorities what *can* be got contains curiously little significance—if significance is what, for a critic, illuminates a poem. And he may go on and on—indeterminately.

It may be said that in these comments I do not sufficiently recognize that a preoccupation with 'context' would involve a continual reference back to the poem. To this I can only reply that (firstly) Mr. Bateson himself doesn't pay any attention to the poem; and that this is not, so to speak, an accident, because (secondly)

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no one who was actually concerned with the problem of arriving at the correct reading of a poem could have conceived Mr. Bateson's phantom scheme of 'contextual checks'—and called it a discipline.

The seriousness with which he takes his 'social context' as a fact, determinate and determining, is complete. 'It is to be noted', he tells us, 'that the culminating desideratum, the final criterion of correctness, is the awareness of the appropriate social context'. He goes on:

> 'The discipline of contextual reading, as defined and illustrated in the preceding paragraphs, should result in the reconstruction of a human situation that is demonstrably implicit in the particular literary work under discussion. Within the limits of human fallibility, the interpretation will be *right*. But the process provides no guarantee, of course, that the reader's response to the essential drama, however correctly that is reconstructed, will be equally correct'.

I confess that I don't know what this means; but Mr. Bateson would seem to be suggesting that one may reconstruct the 'essential drama' of a poem correctly without responding to it correctly; that the taking possession of it is independent of valuing. That is an error of Mr. Bateson's which I remember to have corrected some eighteen years ago.[3] He insists, however, that 'the question of values must not be excluded'. But I find what he says about the nature and process of judgment so wholly unintelligible that I will quote the crucial passage:

> 'the reservation must be immediately made that the judgment is not separable in criticism—as distinct from ethics and aesthetics—from the particular structure of meanings that is being judged. A poem, for example, is not good or bad in itself but only in terms of the contexts in which it originated. For us to be able to use it, to live ourselves into it, the essential requirement is simply an understanding of those original contexts, and especially the original social context. A social order, as such, is necessarily the affirmation of certain values. In the social context, therefore, the values implied in the poem become explicit, and its relative goodness or badness declares itself. Because of its final depen-

[3] I am glad to see that Mr. Bateson took the point. He sums up a discussion thus (*Essays in Criticism*, April, 1953, p. 235):

> 'And the moral? It is, I suppose, that a poem cannot in fact be discussed at any level—above the bibliographical at any rate—unless it has first been read critically. Other people's criticism won't do instead'.

That is what I told him. I regret to have to say that it is wholly characteristic of his work, in its relation to what has appeared in *Scrutiny*, that his grasp of a point he has in a way taken should be so imperfect.

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dence on the setting of the poem within its social context the mere process of responsible reading *includes* the necessary value-judgments'.

I can, I say, extract no meaning from this. It cannot, I suspect, be explained, because the author's conviction (it seems to me) that he had coherent thought to express was an illusion. It would be interesting to be told what sense was made of it by the editorial colleagues ('most of them') who gave the article their 'general approval'. One thing I am certain of: whatever sense can be given it, the passage is incompatible with any true account of value-judgment. One judges a poem by Marvell not by persuading a hypothetical seventeenth-century 'context', or any 'social context', to take the responsibility, but, as one alone can, out of one's personal living (which inevitably is in the twentieth century). The 'mere process of responsible reading', if we take 'responsible', not in Mr. Bateson's inverted sense, but in the ordinary sense, '*includes* the necessary value-judgments' (and 'valuation' is not a simple idea in analogy with 'putting a price on', and not a mere matter of 'relative goodness or badness') because, if the poem is an important challenge, it engages, in the response that 'reconstructs' it, and as an inseparable part of the response, the profoundest and completest sense of relative value that one brings from one's experience. No one realizing the nature of such responding could lay Mr. Bateson's stress upon the 'original social context', whatever precisely such a context may be, and whatever precisely may be the evaluative efficacy that Mr. Bateson ascribes to it.

I have observed earlier that 'social' is an insidious word. The nature of the attraction it has for Mr. Bateson reveals itself to us when he comes to the importance he claims for the responsible critic:

> 'The more closely you read a work of literature—the more, that is, you learn to respond correctly at all the levels of context—the more you will profit by it. But 'profit' is an inadequate word to describe the contribution to the community—with the status such a contribution inevitably confers—that the trained reader brings to a muddled mass society. If it is true that a work of literature cannot be properly understood or appreciated except in terms of the social context in which it originated, the skilled reader of literature will tend, by the nature of his skill, to understand and appreciate contemporary social processes better than his neighbours'.

What in particular actuality the 'contribution' of the 'trained reader' to his muddled 'context' could be we are left to divine from these large intimations—and *their* context. But the nature of the ambition, or hankering, they express is made clear enough. Of the essay of Arnold's that remains for him 'the supreme model' Mr. Bateson says:

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'There are two phrases in that essay, each only four words long, that everyone who has read the first series of *Essays in Criticism* cannot help remembering. They are the four words in which Arnold summed up the case against the English Romantic poets (they "did not know enough") and the four words he quoted from a newspaper report of a particularly sordid child-murder ("Wragg is in custody"). No two phrases could well be more unconnected and apparently irrelevant to each other. Arnold's essay derives its peculiar distinction from its success in persuading us that the two worlds of reference which the phrases symbolize, the literary world and the social world, are in reality closely interrelated. Yes, in the last analysis Wragg was in custody *because* the Romantic poets did not know enough'.

Did Mr. Bateson explain to his colleagues what he meant by that last sentence? Did any one of them ask him to explain it? And if he *had* been asked, what would he have said? Anyone not predisposed by the desire to be told something of the kind can see at once that it is one of those impressive utterances the impressiveness of which depends upon one's not asking what they mean. The conviction with which Mr. Bateson brings it out depends upon the confusion he has engendered with the word 'social'. When he tells us that the 'infusion of social issues, in the widest sense of the term, into purely literary criticism is probably the most crying need of all', we divine the general nature of the intention. We know that this 'widest sense of the term' hasn't the wideness that seemed to excuse the initial use of 'social' in the phrase, 'social context', and we suspect that the intention is closely related to Mr. Bateson's 'impenitence' [4] about Auden. Not that we know in any strict sense what he means; it is impossible to believe that he himself knows. How do you 'infuse social issues' into 'purely literary criticism'? What *is* purely literary criticism? Mr. Bateson clearly feels that he has disposed of this last question, and justified the dismissing and placing work to which he puts the phrase, in his remarks about Mr. Cleanth Brooks, designed as these are to give force to his statement that 'the exclusion of historical and social factors by some modern critics begins to assume a more sinister aspect'. That he should feel so only exemplifies the extravagant irresponsibility that characterizes his whole essay.

A suspicion of the irresponsibility of criticism as known to him in his most intimate acquaintance with it might be diagnosed as the real significance of the portent. Let us prove that 'scholarly criticism' isn't a mere club-game for academics! But the way to vindicate criticism as a serious function is not to claim for the critic a kind of responsibility or competence that doesn't belong to him as such, but to assert and vindicate its true responsibilities. Intent on these, one will see little need to talk about 'literary values' (and I don't

[4] 'On the status of Auden at any rate I am impenitently on Father Jarrett-Kerr's side'. F. W. Bateson, *Essays in Criticism*, April, 1953.

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know what 'purely literary criticism' would be—unless strictly relevant criticism). The critic, by way of his discipline for relevance in dealing with created works, is concerned with life. But Mr. Bateson's posited relation between poem and 'social context' is a matter of vain and muddled verbiage; the student who supposes that there is, or was, or can be, any reality answering to those impressive formulations will at the best be able to say that he has had the pleasure and the profit of disabusing himself.

The business of the literary critic as such is with literary criticism. It is pleasant to hope that, when he writes or talks about political or 'social' matters, insight and understanding acquired in literary studies will be engaged—even if not demonstrably (and even if we think it a misleading stress to speak of his special understanding of 'contemporary social processes'). But his special responsibility as critic (and, say, as the editor of a critical review) is to serve the function of criticism to the best of his powers. He will serve it ill unless he has a clear conception of what a proper working of the function in contemporary England would be like, and unless he can tell himself why the function matters. If he tells himself (and others) that it matters 'because a skilled reader of literature will tend, by the nature of his skill, to understand and appreciate contemporary social processes better than his neighbours', he misrepresents it and promotes confusion and bad performance.

'It is important', he says, 'to emphasize the *utile* as well as the *dulce* of criticism'. The confusion, pregnant with ill-consequences, is *there*, in that distinction of his which he offers with such confident matter-of-factness. The *utile* of criticism is to see that the created work fulfils its *raison d'être*; that is, that it is read, understood and duly valued, and has the influence it should have in the contemporary sensibility. The critic who relates his business to a full conception of criticism conceives of himself as helping, in a collaborative process, to define—that is, to form—the contemporary sensibility. What it should be possible to say of 'the skilled reader of literature' is that he 'will tend, by the nature of his skill', to understand and appreciate contemporary *literature* better than his neighbours. The serious critic's concern with the literature of the past is with its life in the present; it will be informed by the kind of perception that can distinguish intelligently and sensitively the significant new life in contemporary literature.

These reminders of the conception of the critical function that the editor of a literary review ought to have are enough to enforce my point. If literature, as the critic is committed to supposing it does, matters, then what in relation to it matters above all is that it should be what it ought to be in contemporary life; that is, that there should be such a public as the conception I have pointed to implies: a public intelligently responsive and decisively influential. It is through such a public, and through the conditions of general education implied in the existence of such a public, that literature, as the critic is concerned, with it, can reasonably be thought of as influencing contemporary affairs and telling in realms in which

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literary critics are not commonly supposed to count for much.

That is the faith of the critic. Where contemporary cultural conditions give no ground for such a faith—where there is no such public, and literature, in the critic's sense, is not a power in contemporary life—then for a critic to encourage himself with talk of the important rôle that the 'skilled reader' plays in a 'muddled mass society' by reason of his superior understanding of 'contemporary social processes' is irresponsible trifling or solemn self-deception. What does Mr. Bateson mean when, appealing for support to poor Arnold, he says 'The values of the modern world would seem to the layman to be embodied in literature to a far greater degree than they are in modern religion or philosophy'? Does he suppose that there is any close relation (or, as things are, any but a discouraging one) between the conception to which, with the help of the reference to Arnold, we can see him to be pointing (in spite of his unhappy phraseology), and the kind of importance he offers the 'skilled reader'?

There *is*, however, a special understanding of 'contemporary social processes', and a special preoccupation with them, that a critic as such, and above all the editor of a critical review, ought to show. I am thinking of those 'social processes' for my preoccupation with which I was rebuked, in the October issue of *Essays in Criticism*, by Fr. Martin Jarrett-Kerr—the social processes that have virtually brought the function of criticism in this country into abeyance. I say, I was rebuked for that, though actually the nature of the preoccupation got no recognition in the course of some strictures on the persistence in *Scrutiny* of the evidence of it. Why, my critic wondered, should I have thought it worth devoting several precious pages of *Scrutiny* to 'a series of derogatory comments on an unimportant autobiography by Mr. Stephen Spender'? The reference was to an article (Vol. XVIII, No. 1), 'Keynes, Spender and Currency Values', in which I related Mr. Roy Harrod's *Life of Keynes* to Mr. Spender's book in an account of the processes that have, as I say, virtually extinguished the critical function. Again, a discussion of the significance of one of those British Council 'Surveys' becomes an attack on Mr. John Hayward and the Warden of Wadham.

I look with some anxiety for evidence that Fr. Jarrett-Kerr was not expressing a sense of these matters that he shares with Mr. Bateson and the Editorial Board of *Essays in Criticism*. I know of none—which is a surprising thing, in view of the daily battle that has to be fought (if one takes either education or the function of criticism seriously) against the processes of civilization that have been documented in *Scrutiny* (with *Fiction and the Reading Public* in the background) during the past twenty years. Does Mr. Bateson share Fr. Jarrett-Kerr's view that it doesn't matter what the reviewing in the weeklies or the Sunday papers is like; or how the B.B.C. uses its immense resources, and its formidable powers of literary influence; or what the British Council does with its prestige, its authority and the public funds; and that it doesn't matter if all

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these are shown (by a redundance of such evidence as may be represented by Mr. John Hayward's *Survey*) to work together in a system that brings in also the universities, and if the system imposes the valuations and the ethos of the Sunday reviewing?

Will he deny the evidence, or dismiss it without consideration? Or, does he think that, if at Oxford *Essays in Criticism* (strengthened by 'going to school with both Mr. Empson and Mr. Trilling') opens its 'Critical Forum' quarterly, and at Cambridge *Scrutiny* (in its less scholarly way)[5] still continue to carry on, the function of criticism in this country is being pretty well provided for? If so, I cannot take seriously his idea of the function of criticism, or his interest in literature, or his conception of its importance—and a peculiarly ironical light is thrown on his own view that the 'skilled reader' may be counted on to contribute to the community (winning thus 'the status such a contribution inevitably confers') a superior insight into 'contemporary social processes'.

. . . . . .

If you propose to place the importance of literary criticism in some non-literary-critical function, you betray your unbelief that literary criticism really matters. And, if you don't believe in literary criticism then your belief that literature itself matters will have the support of an honoured convention, but must be suspect of resting very much on that. And if you don't see that literature matters for what really gives it importance, then no account you offer of the intellectual superiority that may be expected to bring the 'skilled reader' of literature 'status' in the community can be anything but muddle and self-delusion. On the other hand, as I insisted with close argument and particularity of illustration in *Education and the University*, to be seriously interested in literary criticism as a discipline of intelligence is inevitably to be led into other fields of interest. I have remarked on the irresponsibility with which Mr. Bateson assimilates me with Mr. Cleanth Brooks, under the head of that 'purely literary criticism' which ignores its 'social duty'. For that is what he does, with his not uncalculating, but characteristically irresponsible procedure (he doesn't, I think, *mean* any harm). No one would gather from his essay that (so far as producible evidence is concerned) I have paid considerably more attention to relating literary criticism with other studies and disciplines, and to defining its importance for any one seriously concerned with the problems of contemporary civilization, than he has done.

The substance of *Education and the University* (as also the closely related essay printed later as an introduction to *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge*) appeared in *Scrutiny*, the spirit of which has been in keeping. But what matters most about a mainly literary review is its performance in actual literary criticism. It is impossible

[5]A way that, nevertheless, to judge from the pages of *Essays in Criticism*, 'scholars' find substantially helpful as well as stimulating.

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to gather from Mr. Bateson's so promisingly styled essay that he has any notion of what a justifying, or a creditable, performance of the function discussed by him would be. You cannot adequately discuss the 'Function of Criticism at the Present Time' in terms of critical method—even in terms of critical method as variously exemplified by the string of names that for Mr. Bateson constitute the 'new critical movement' to the 'splendid qualities of which' we have 'gradually got used'.

To make my point effectively it is necessary to have recourse to the concrete: you cannot cogently present the idea of criticism as a matter of generalities. In so far then, as the function of criticism (which, for a full performance, demands interplay between different centres) *can* be performed in one organ, *Scrutiny* represents a sustained attempt, over the past twenty years, to perform it in relation to contemporary England. And for the performance, in spite of all deficiencies (of which the Editors would perhaps give a severer *just* account than anyone else), this sober claim can be made: the volumes offer an incomparable literary history of the period, and, at the same time, in such consonance as to be an organic part of the whole coherent critical achievement, what will be recognized to amount to a major revaluation of the past of English literature. That is because *Scrutiny* was concerned to determine the significant points in the contemporary field and to make, with due analysis, the necessary judgments, and because its judgments have invariably turned out to be right. 'While literary people in general', testifies Mr. Eric Bentley,[6] 'waited till recently to discover that Lawrence was great and that Aldous Huxley is not great, *Scrutiny* made the correct appraisals from the start'. Mr. Bentley here is offering an illustration of a general truth. I say that the judgments have turned out to be right: after what was often the most indignant resistance in the world of literary fashions, they have been accepted, and now pass current as what has been always known.

It may be said that Mr. Bateson disagrees about Auden. But Mr. Bateson's disagreement, by the signs, is a very half-hearted last-ditch affair. 'On the status of Auden', he says (*Essays in Criticism*, April, 1953), 'I am impenitently on Fr. Jarrett-Kerr's side'. Apart from the fact that Fr. Jarrett-Kerr's grounds are Anglo-Catholic, stressing Auden's later development, while Mr. Bateson's, I suspect, are wholly different, Fr. Jarrett-Kerr has explicitly abandoned the claim of major status for Auden. But it was the belief that Auden *was* a major poet, a luminary comparable in magnitude with Yeats and Eliot—superseding Eliot, in fact—that gave him his immense influence. *Scrutiny* challenged the estimate from the start with steady criticism, and challenged the whole Poetical Renascence—Auden, Spender, the present Professor of Poetry at

[6]In his Introduction to *The Importance of Scrutiny* (George W. Stewart, New York), a volume of selections from *Scrutiny*. Mr. Bentley conceived and carried out this project in America, wholly on his own initiative.

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Oxford, and the rest—at a time (let it be once again recorded) when the Royalist, Anglo-Catholic and Classicist *Criterion* gave the movement, a 'gang-movement' if ever there was one, the freedom of its review pages.

To place Auden and that Public School Leftism; to stand by Eliot (who in the early 'thirties needed it), while making duly the limiting, qualifying and adverse judgments; to insist on Eliot's immense superiority as a creative force to Pound, while at the same time insisting on Lawrence's immense superiority to Eliot; to justify a lack of sustained interest in Joyce—I need not enumerate the other and related judgments in the contemporary field that *Scrutiny* established critically: my point is that *here*, in such work, we have the *utile* of criticism (and it is *creative* work). In the creating, with reference to the appropriate criteria—the creating in an intelligent public—of a valid sense of the contemporary chart (as it were), or sense of the distribution of value and significance as a mind truly alive in the age would perceive them, the 'function of criticism at the present time' has its fulfilment. It is to such a fulfilment that a critic must look when he inquires into the nature of his special responsibility. And if, really believing that literature matters, he ponders the importance of such a fulfilment, he will hardly feel the need to prove his seriousness by claiming, as a critic, any more direct efficacy of engagement upon the 'social' and political world.

But Mr. Bateson shows something like an unawareness of the function of criticism so conceived. In relation to the contemporary writers, the critics, it falls within his purpose to discuss he betrays what I can only call an inertia of judgment. His uncritical largeness of respect for the 'splendid qualities' of what he styles the 'new critical movement' might be taken for tact. But why should he 'respect and admire' the criticism of Wyndham Lewis? That reputation was never grounded in anything but fashion, and fashion of the frothiest kind. To commend Christopher Caudwell is perhaps less of an offence, since the inertness of the acclaiming judgment that perpetuates his book as a classic is in general tacitly recognized; few besides the critic who reviewed it for *Scrutiny* have really read it through, and no one, at this date, is likely to be persuaded that he ought to try and read it. But what excuse can Mr. Bateson allege for saying that he 'respects and admires' the dialectic of Kenneth Burke, which some earnest souls may very well suppose that they ought to devote themselves to mastering? Itself it represents astonishing energy and devotion, but how utterly unrelated its rigours are to any problem that may concern an intelligent student of literature Marius Bewley has, in a very thorough examination, shown in *Scrutiny*. And why does Mr. Bateson speak of the 'thoroughness, the usefulness' and the 'general good sense' of Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature*? To have suggested that the student may go hopefully to it for help or enlightenment is an irresponsibility that ought to trouble Mr. Bateson's conscience. There are too many of these conventional values which, once established, are perpetuated by inertia, and it is *not* the function of criticism to countenance them.

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I am provoked, then, by Mr. Bateson to point out that, in the field in which he has offered himself as the astringent and pioneering representative of discrimination, it is *Scrutiny* that has done the work. The history is a long one. *Scrutiny*, twenty years ago, provided the radical criticism of the 'psychological', pseudo-scientific, and, generally, Neo-Benthamite enterprises of I. A. Richards—who, oddly enough, owed his prestige and his then virtually unchallenged institutional status in so large a part to the support of T. S. Eliot. In the matter of Eliot's own criticism, it was in *Scrutiny* that the discriminations were established.

As for the function of criticism in regard to the life in the present of the literature of the past, that I may fairly say, has not been neglected in *Scrutiny*. To take the novel: not only have the main particular *Scrutiny* revaluations become generally current, but the associated idea of the significant tradition from Jane Austen to Lawrence (as well as a totally new conception of Jane Austen's importance and of the nature of her achievement) has become a fact of general acceptance at the same time, with the implication that it has always been so About this, and all the other work of major revaluation, affecting radically the prevailing sense of the past, that has been achieved in *Scrutiny*, I will say no more than this: if Mr. Bateson would like evidence of what has been done, and evidence that it has *told*, he will find it on an impressive scale if he looks through the files of *Essays in Criticism*, starting backwards from the present issue, and engages in some genuine comparative scholarship.

I have not ended on this note in any spirit of vainglorious pleasure. But there are occasions when the idea of modesty is out of place, and to be intimidated by it is to neglect (in Mr. Bateson's phrase) one's 'social duty'. This seems to me decidedly one. One cannot, as I have said, effectively present the idea of the critical function—the Function of Criticism at the Present Time—in generalities: one must show it in the concrete, in action. To present it as effectively as possible seems to me, in the circumstances, what is called for. And the way I have taken is the best I know—I know of no other, in fact—of enforcing what I have said, making plain what I mean by it, and vindicating my right to say it, with some astringency, to Mr. Bateson.

F. R. LEAVIS.

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COWLEY, MARVELL AND THE SECOND TEMPLE

'The second temple was not like the first'
—Dryden, 1694.

AT the opening of the Restoration period, Abraham Cowley was generally conceded to be the most eminent and representative literary figure of his time. In addition to having achieved great popularity in the modes of drama, epic, elaborate ode, and conceited lyric, and a satirist of the Puritan movement, he had been one of the chief promoters of the Royal Society project and his *Proposition For the Advancement of Learning* suggested the main outlines and aims of the Society. A statement from the preface of Cowley's 'Proposition' will show how directly he is in the pattern of thought which we have extracted from the writers already considered:

> 'Our reasoning faculty as well as fancy does but dream, when it is not guided by sensible objects. We shall compound where Nature has divided, and divide where Nature has compounded, and create nothing but either deformed monsters, or at best pretty but impossible mermaids'.[1]

On the followers of Aristotle, his comment takes the characteristic contemporary line—they could 'not grasp, or lay hold on, or so much as touch Nature, because they catched only at the shadow of her in their own brains'. And in his 1667 Pindarics *To the Royal Society*, appended to Sprat's *History* at publication, Bacon is once more brought forth as the saviour, in lines which suggest in tone the epics of *Paradise Lost* or *Absalom and Achitophel*, and which enforce the connection of this whole movement toward natural philosophy with the affirmation of monarchy and the counteraction of Puritanism:

> Bacon at last, a mighty man, arose
> Whom a wise king and Nature chose
> Lord Chancellor of both their laws.

The idea of the Monarch is throughout the period identified directly or indirectly, by its proponents, with the idea of external Nature. And Man's first disobedience is once more shadowed forth in the form of the notorious Puritan individualism:

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[1]Abraham Cowley, *A Proposition for the Advancement of Learning*, (1661), Preface, par. 3.

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> Yet still, methinks, we fain would be
> Catching at the forbidden tree,
> We would be like the Deity,
> When Truth and Falsehood, Good and Evil, we
> Without the senses' aid within ourselves would see;
> For 'tis God only who can find
> All Nature in his mind.

This is the Puritan *inward light* which Butler pokes fun at on the basis of its arrogant and unverifiable character—the same by which Donne said 'every man alone thinkes he hath got to be a Phoenix'. The antidote to this is a return to the solid and disinterested substance of external nature, through the empirical approach which Bacon fostered—Bacon who was at the same time right hand man to the great Queen, and whose essays have as their *fiat* the preservation of the social organism:

> From words, which are but pictures of the thought,
> (Though we our thoughts from them perversely drew)
> To things, the mind's right object, he it brought.

Like Sprat, and in nearly the same words, Cowley combines the return to Nature with the return of monarchy:

> Those smallest things of Nature let me know,
> Rather than all their greatest actions do.
> Whoever would deposed truth advance
> Into the throne usurp'd from it . . .

Such contact with 'the smallest things of Nature' is not readily gained in the urban confines of London's flourishing metropolis—in what Cowley elsewhere calls

> . . . all th'uncleanness which does drown
> in pestilential clouds a populous town.[2]

What is more, London was the great business centre and stronghold of the Puritans, so it is to be expected those of Cowley's convictions should lend intellectual support to an anti-urban revolt. The verses to the Royal Society were not written from the Court, nor does their defence of monarchy represent courtly adulation; Cowley had in fact received rough treatment at the hands of the restored king, and had been denied the preferment which was his expected lot. They were composed at Chertsey, in the pastoral retreat which occupied Cowley's last years— but one should not take this position to be a disgruntled alternative to success in the world of affairs. Cowley wrote:

> 'And I never then proposed to myself any other advantage from his Majesty's happy restoration but the getting into some

[2]Cowley, *Several Discourses By Way of Essays, In Verse and Prose*, (1668), 'The Garden, to J. Evelyn, Esquire', stanza 5.

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> moderately convenient retreat in the country, which I thought in that case I might easily have compassed, as well as some others, who, with no greater probabilities or pretences, have arrived to extraordinary fortunes . . . However, by the failing of the forces which I had expected, I did not quit the design, which I had resolved on, I cast myself into it *à corps perdu*, without making capitulations or taking counsel of Fortune'.[3]

However disappointed Cowley might have been with his personal lot under the monarchy, he remained a staunch supporter of the system, and found in its framework the pholosophical and literary implications which we have noted in others. The move is in substance one towards the agrarian world which represents the old monarchy as against the new urban society. Cowley had little sympathy with this last—either with the Puritan mercantile side or with the dandified court gentlemen—'all the female men or women there':[4]

> Hail, the poor Muses' richest manor-seat!
> Ye country houses and retreat,
> Which all the happy gods so love,
> That for you oft they quit their bright and great
> Metropolis above.
> . . .
> While this hard truth I teach, methinks I see
> The monster London laugh at me;
> I should at thee too, foolish city,
> If it were fit to laugh at misery,
> But thy estate I pity.[5]

This is clearly a conservative move in the direction of *stability*. David Mathew, in his recent book, *The Social Structure of Caroline England*, observes:

> 'It was precisely in this quality of land ownership that the English secular sense of worth found its expression. It was here that Englishmen placed their true stability, in the landed men of property, not in the court'.

Or, as Cowley writes:

> Let cities boast that they provide
> For life the ornaments of pride;
> But 'tis the country and the field
> That furnish it with staff and shield.[6]

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[3]*Ibid.*, par. 1.
[4]*Ibid.*, stanza 5.
[5]Cowley, *Several Discourses*, 'Of Solitude', stanza 2.
[6]Cowley, *Several Discourses*, 'The Garden', stanza 2.

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One comes to see, as the growth of industrial, mercantile, and metropolitan culture progresses, how much this constitutes a fugitive movement. Professor Tawney provides evidence here:

> 'The rapid absorption by absentee aliens of estates in Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire was noted with disfavour under James I, and much the same statement as to properties in Berkshire was made half a century later by Fuller; while nearly two-thirds of the gentry owning land in Bedfordshire in 1620 were said to have sold it and left the county by 1668. The oft-quoted remark that half the properties in conservative Staffordshire had changed hands in sixty years does not, in the light of such evidence, appear too unplausible. The passing of familiar names, the break-up of patriarchal households, the unpleasantness of the *parvenus* who rose on their ruins, provided dramatists with materials for satire and moralists for sermons. If Sir Petronel Flash and Sir Giles Overreach were successful as parodies, it was that the nauseous reality was not too grossly caricatured'.[7]

For Cowley himself it seems to have been undertaken very much in a spirit of *carpe diem*, a latter-day version of the Cavaliers. He ends his pastorals always on the note:

> These unbought sports, this happy state,
> I would not fear nor wish my fate,
> But boldly say each night,
> To-morrow let my sun his beams display,
> Or in clouds hide them; I have lived to-day.[8]

Or again:

> Enjoy the present hour, be thankful for the past,
> And neither fear nor wish th' approaches of the last.[9]

He leaves little doubt that he is inimical to the 'men of business'. In translating some lines of Horace beginning 'God made not pleasures only for the rich', he remarks:

> 'This seems a strange sentence thus literally translated, and looks as if it were in vindication of the men of business (for who else can deceive the world?) . . .'.[10]

So when Cowley argues for a retreat from the world into the realm of solitude, Nature, and gardens, he is furnishing in amalgam an antidote to Puritanism and the milieu of business progress, a defence of the natural empiricism which is officially represented by the aims of the Royal Society, and an affirmation of the idea of 'social

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[7]R. H. Tawney, 'The Rise of the Gentry', in *The Economic History Review*, Vol. XI, No. 1, 1941, p. 21.

[8]Cowley, *Several Discourses*, 'Of Myself', stanza 11.

[9]*Ibid.*, from Martial, Book X, Epigram 47.

[10]*Ibid.*, 'Of Obscurity', par. 1.

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organism' which we have described, stressing particularly its philosophical correlative of bringing the torn and divided 'soule' back to unity. The terms of his apostrophes to solitude are noteworthy—he refers it back, in the line of others we have noted, to the state of a pristine early world, 'first state of humankind',

> Before the branchy head of number's tree
> Sprang from the trunk of One.[11]

We need not doubt that he has in mind another world of England, not so long since past. The state which he describes possesses the great virtue of organizing his own personality so that he can produce works:

> Thou the faint beams of Reason's scatter'd light,
> Dost like a burning-glass unite,
> Dost multiply the feeble heat,
> And fortify the strength, till thou dost bright
> And noble fires beget.[12]

It is this sort of integration, of providing a firm and orderly structure where it had disappeared and was needed, in the organism of society and in its mirror, the individual personality, that Cowley looks for in his country retreat:

> 'I never had any other desire so strong and so like to covetousness as that one which I have had always, that I might be master at last of a small house and large garden, with very moderate conveniences joined to them, and there dedicate the remainder of my life to the culture of them and study of Nature,
>
> And there (with no design beyond my wall)
> whole and entire to lie . . .'.[13]

So behind Cowley's return to Nature, and his revolt from all that is associated with the rising urban world of London and the shaky Court of Charles II, is firmly fixed the idea of the social organism which was dying. It is philosophically the idea of a static hierarchic order which will permit him 'to lie, whole and entire'. There is nothing of the Romantic impulse toward wild freedom in Cowley's view of Nature—and here Cowley speaks for his period. He makes his conception of the natural scene quite clear, finding in Nature the quality which he can no longer find in society, when he begins his pastoral poem to Solitude:

> Hail, old patrician trees, so great and good!
> Hail, ye plebeian under-wood!
> Where the poetic birds rejoice . . .[14]

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[11]Cowley, *Several Discourses*, 'Of Solitude', stanza 8.
[12]*Ibid.*, stanza 10.
[13]Cowley, *Several Discourses*, 'The Garden', par. 1.
[14]*Ibid.*, 'Of Solitude', stanza 1.

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The evidence of Andrew Marvell provides a useful parallel to Cowley in corroborating this analysis of the place of Nature in the Restoration dialectic. He left the University for the Continent in 1646, and returned to England four years later to see the Cromwell government flourishing. His *Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland*, written in that year, expresses respect for the power of the man and an English satisfaction at Cromwell's having impressed the Irish and Scots, but ends on the sceptical note of whether he will stand the real test and be able to hold on to what he has gained. Marvell himself went into different surroundings, to a position not too different from that of Cowley's retreat. He became, that same year, tutor to Lord Fairfax's daughter, and went to live at Nun Appleton, the Fairfax country estate in Yorkshire. In his few years there he produced all his good poetry, small in quantity but possessed of a brilliance, imagination, and excitement far beyond the reach of Cowley. It owes these qualities largely to its contact, often quite visionary, with the world of external Nature in which Marvell was living—a contact which has something hectic and fevered about it, to remind us that this work was done before the Restoration. Nature is for Marvell imbued with far more of the sensory and sensual than it is for Cowley, far more easily related to his 'vegetable love' (which justifies the conventional inclusion of Marvell with the Donne school), but it also performs the same function for Marvell as for Cowley—that of being a stable comforter in a world upset by movement:

> How vainly men themselves amaze
> To win the palm, the oak, or bays;
> And their uncessant labours see
> Crown'd from some single herb or tree,
> Whose short and narrow verged shade
> Does prudently their toils upbraid;
> While all flow'rs and all trees do close
> To weave the garlands of repose.
>
> Fair Quiet, have I found thee here,
> And Innocence, thy sister dear!
> Mistaken long, I sought you then
> In busy companies of men.
> Your sacred plants, if here below,
> Only among the plants will grow.
> Society is all but rude,
> To this delicious solitude.

Except, perhaps, for the hint of sensualism in the final adjective, this, so far, could be taken, in sentiment and execution, for a characteristic Restoration product. And true to the convention, Marvell like Cowley rings the change on the Garden of Eden:

> Such was that happy garden-state
> While man there walked without a mate

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Marvell too gives strong voice to the notion of *carpe diem*, though his complaint that he had not 'world enough, and time' and admonition that we should

> Rather at once our time devour,
> Than languish in his slow-chapped pow'r

have a fierceness and a body which distinguishes them from any of Cowley's frequent rehearsals of the sentiment as he looked round his garden retreat, and we are again reminded that, though moving clearly in the direction of Cowley's late period and the Restoration generally, Marvell is still in 1650-53 a transition figure. Two more stanzas of Marvell's *Garden* enforce that observation, and serve to round out the picture of Nature's philosophical—and as I have tried to indicate, even social—correlatives. The first is completely sensory in the way we associate with some of the major Romantic poets of the nineteenth century—only a word here and there might keep us from thinking that this is the world of Keats, and if we consider literally the picture it calls up, of the poet thus gambolling in his garden, we may be overcome by a sense of the ludicrous which makes the poetic antics and poses of some of the later Romantic sensualists such meat for cartoon and burlesque:

> What wond'rous life is this I lead!
> Ripe apples drop about my head;
> The luscious clusters of the vine
> Upon my mouth do crush their wine;
> The nectarine, and curious peach,
> Into my hands themselves do reach;
> Stumbling on melons, as I pass,
> Ensnar'd with flow'rs, I fall on grass.

Yet something in this stanza obviously makes it a different affair. I would say it is the compelling quality of the bizarre—the realized nightmarish hyperbole of Nature as a sort of giant fleshy orchid, deliciously hostile and unbridled by any rational end or discipline, which closes around the man and devours him. The 'curious' peach does not strike us as innocent. There is an ominous air of uncontrol about this picture of sensory pleasure, in which man becomes not agent but victim. I cite it because it represents one of the two realms which could be observed as moving dangerously apart in the Metaphysical poetry of the first half of the century—the departments of body and mind, passion and reason, sense and thought. The next stanza furnishes the other realm:

> Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,
> Withdraws into its happiness:
> The mind, that ocean where each kind
> Does straight its own resemblance find;
> Yet it creates, transcending these,
> Far other worlds, and other seas;
> Annihilating all that's made
> To a green thought in a green shade.

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This image of the mind as a green ocean swallowing up and destroying the outward form of all 'sensible objects' can claim basic kinship with the phrasing given to the same issue by Shakespeare's Antony, in his conversation with Eros:

> That which is now a horse, even with a thought
> The rack dislimns, and makes it indistinct,
> As water is in water.

And when Marvell, in the last couplet, transforms the image of the sea to that of the garden, heightened so as to be felt almost as the disembodied essence of a tropical vegetable gloom which destroys the sensory properties of everything, 'annihilating all that's made to a green thought in a green shade', the atmosphere is once more, as in the preceding stanza, thoroughly sinister. With the growing separation of these two realms of sense and thought, each in its pure state becomes dangerous and destructive, and Nature is felt by Marvell, as by Donne in *The First Anniversary*, as Nature in crisis. Yet it is this same garden which, earlier in the poem, was 'to weave the garlands of repose', leading on to Cowley, Evelyn, Sir William Temple, and the whole cult of the pastoral retreat. Marvell in the 1650's was politically unsettled as well, and was even to perform academic services as tutor of Cromwell's ward, and, along with Milton, Latin Secretary to Cromwell. With the Restoration his position became clear and he became an active member of Parliament. His career as an exciting poet, however, ended when he left Nun Appleton.

Now that we have seen some of the meanings attached to Cowley's desire for 'a small house and a large garden', it belongs to a consideration of background to look at the character of these houses and gardens as they were being built at that time, expecting that their forms would in some way bear out their rôles in the spheres of values and ideas. We find the architecture of the houses taking on a formal character of order, balance, regularity, and harmony of parts, modelled on the Palladian scheme, and the leading architect Sir Christopher Wren, son of the Dean of Windsor and nephew to the Bishop of Ely, anatomist, astronomer, and leading member of the Royal Society. In contrast, we find the gardens and grounds rambling according to the vagaries of untouched Nature, or even tampered with in such ways as to increase the sense of rambling. This relation, which Professor Nikolaus Pevsner in his *Outline of European Architecture* calls 'the puzzling parallelism between classicist architecture and natural gardening' [15] actually falls in line to strengthen the foregoing analysis of the anti-urban movement. Those belonging to the group who felt the need for preserving or affirming the qualities of order, stability, and proportion (they being, of course the group who would build a country house) as a bastion against the bourgeois progressive character of

[15]Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture*, London, John Murray, 1948, p. 185.

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the City merchant or Puritan pilgrim, naturally incorporated these qualities into its design. Furthermore, we can logically assume that house and grounds were conceived of as a unit, so that the grounds are looked at in the same spirit. Thus the fact that the grounds were kept natural and unarranged is witness to our former observation that in turning their attention and their faith toward external Nature and away from the City, these men were actually turning to an idea of order, such as that which had once been embodied in the 'social organism' but had now disappeared from the Puritan-mercantile picture of urban society. It was only in man-made artifices such as the house that this order had to be intruded—in the natural scene it was presumed to be already there, as indeed 'before the Fall' it had been in the social scene as well and had needed *no* synthetic expression or special seeking. The contrast here is with the Elizabethan house, which roamed naturally over the natural grounds. It is also appropriate that Wren should have been a pillar of the Royal Society, since we have seen that the Royal Society apologists explained and justified their aim in turning attention to Nature as being a safe antidote to civil chaos and 'ambitious disquiets'. This faith in the character of the natural landscape develops with the fleet of 'Augustans' in the first half of the next century (Pope, Gay, Collins, Thomson, Dyer, Shenstone, the Wartons, etc.) into a brand of 'Nature' poetry which leads directly into the nineteenth century Romantics—a process which is too much looked upon as involving a reaction against the 'Age of Reason'. Professor Pevsner observes:

> 'Boileau's objections in his *Art of Poetry* against the Baroque of the South were that it was unreasonable and therefore unnatural. Reason and nature are still synonyms with Addison and Pope, as we have seen in Pope's comments on Blenheim'.[16]

And Pope speaks for himself in *Windsor Forest*, published 1713, to corroborate this view of Nature:

> Here hills and vales, the woodland and the plain,
> Here earth and water seem to strive again;
> Not chaos-like together crush'd and bruis'd,
> But, as the world, harmoniously confus'd:
> Where order in variety we see,
> And where, though all things differ, all agree.

Furthermore, since I have indicated this development as having its roots in the English social crisis, it might be well to remark that the house-garden scheme just described was a purely English phenomenon and has no such parallel in the contemporary foreign cultures as might lead one to attribute the set-up to fortuitous fashion (though our needs often dictate our fashions as well). The prevailing fashionable influences were French (in France, indeed, some of the same factors were at work), but Professor Pevsner draws

[16]Pevsner, *loc. cit.*

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the sharp contrast between the French scene, where the monarchy was as yet undisturbed, and the English post-Rebellion picture:

> 'So while one remembers the grandeur and elegance of French seventeenth and eighteenth century architecture as urban all the way through—for the straight avenues in the park of Versailles are urban in spirit too—one should never forget in looking at the formality of English Palladian houses between 1660 and 1760 that their complement is the English garden. John Wood's Prior Park possesses such informal natural grounds'.[17]

Nor should we assume that only the house was being considered in the creation of this picture of order. Pevsner enforces this when he writes of Palladio himself, in a discussion of the earlier Italian scene:

> 'Here for the first time in Western architecture landscape and building were conceived as belonging to each other, as dependent on each other'.[18]

And in the sociological sphere as well, the English scene interestingly contrasts with the French, and with the rest of the Continent. Professor Tawney remarks this, in beginning his article, 'The Rise of the Gentry':

> 'The first English translator of Locke's *Thoughts on Education* introduced it with the remark that foreign readers, in order to appreciate it, must remember the audience to whom it was addressed. It was composed, he explains, for the edification of an element in society to which the Continent offered no exact analogy, but which had become in the last century the dominant force in English life. To M. Coste, in 1695, the triumphant ascent of the English gentry—neither a *noblesse*, nor a bureaucracy, but mere *bons bourgeois*—seemed proof of an insular dynamic of which France, with the aid of his translation, would do well to learn the secret'.[19]

I have in the foregoing account deduced the conception of Nature as orderly structure by referring natural gardens back to their concomitant man-made structures in which the character of order is outwardly apparent. It might be felt, however, that some added justification is needed for relating of this type of architecture to the character of the social changes with which I have linked it. Furthermore, since I have indicated this architecture as 'Palladian', it is proper to ask whether, in its native source of Renaissance Italy, orderly or formal architecture owed its character to any similar social circumstances—a question which, if answered in the affirmative, would strengthen the above analysis of its English manifesta-

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[17]Pevsner, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

[18]*Ibid.*, p. 106.

[19]Tawney, 'The Rise of the Gentry', *The Economic History Review*, Vol. XI, No. 1., 1941, p. 1.

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tion. For these answers I would look briefly at the scene in Northern Italy two centuries earlier.

The most salient feature of the social organization confronting us there is that it is based on the city-state, ruled by the merchant-prince. Professor Butterfield, we might remember, has given encouragement for making a parallel in this respect with the basis of English society in the Restoration period:

> 'And just as the Renaissance was particularly associated with city-states (or virtual city-states) in Italy, South Germany and the Netherlands, where the commerce and economic development had produced an exhilarating civic life, so in the last quarter of the seventeenth century the intellectual changes were centred on the English Channel, where commerce had been making so remarkable a rise and so much prosperity seemed to have been achieved. The city-state disappeared from history in the first half of the sixteenth century; but on the wider platform of the nation-state the future still belonged to what we call the middle classes'.[20]

Florence, perhaps the leading seat of culture in the period, was such a city-state, and its presiding merchant-princes were the Medici family. The Medici position was in no way a stable one; constantly threatened, they even fled briefly from the city in 1494, though their hold was not long broken; a plot against Giuliano, Giovanni, and Giulio Medici failed in 1513, and in 1537 Lorenzino Medici murdered the Duke Alessandro, also a Medici. Their characteristic type of building was the *palazzo*, an urban fortress-mansion, and it is interesting to note that the architectural style of these *palazzi*, whose lower quarters were 'massive yet orderly, faced with heavily rusticated blocks', presents an exterior aspect of ordered formality strikingly suggestive of that developed by Sir Christopher Wren. (Compare, for instance, the Palazzo Rucellai and Trinity Library). We have some index to the literary correlative of this Italian architectural style, and of the prevailing spirit which dictated it, in the famous poem written about 1490 by Lorenzo di Medici himself, beginning:

> Quant'e bella giovinezza
> Che si fugge tuttavia.
> Chi vuol esser lieto sia.
> Di doman' non c'e certezza.
>
> How lovely is youth.
> But it flies from us.
> If you want to be happy, be happy now.
> There is no certainty of to-morrow.

Such were the phrases penned by Cowley, Marvell, and many others of their period, as has been illustrated. Professor Pevsner comments

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[20]H. Butterfield, *Origins of Modern Science*, p. 166.

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on these lines by *Il Magnifico*:

> 'Now these men, if they built a church, did not want to be reminded by its appearance of that uncertain to-morrow and of what may come after this life is ended. They wanted architecture to eternalize the present'.[21]

One approach to an eternalization of the present in the Restoration period lay in making much of the moment and of the material world of the senses. Another lay in the scramble for 'reputation', a fame of achievement which would outlast the mortal coils. As for the life after death, that was so directly the goal and province of the Puritan ethos that those in opposition to the fact and implications of the social movement associated with Puritanism felt driven by contrast to put their faith in the corporeal world, and, since Puritanism was an urban business movement, in the non-urban corporeal world of the natural countryside, which led into the implied atheism of Hobbes and the Deists. But if this removed that 'uncertain to-morrow' of life after death which is a central part of Western religion it did so to enthrone an idea of order for which a more immediate need was felt. When the church had capped the social pyramid, in Tawney's picture, the two issues had been as congruent as afterwards their divergence was inescapable. And the corollary here is, of course, that the return to the non-urban natural scene was to be associated with a return to the agrarian basis of society representative of the old order which had been invaded by the host of economic and religious appetites. In these country surroundings the best appearances to put up in order to distinguish oneself from the business enterpriser or Puritan zealot was that of scholar and dilettante. But the city was growing daily in importance, and there is no mistaking in all of this literature the marks of a defensive Old-Guardism. Its exponents seem to dominate when we look at the literature only because they constitute the literary segment—this activity of producing and talking about literature constitutes an important part of their dilettante character. If the side of the opposition seems largely unrepresented, it is because their interest was not in literature but in more practical and remunerative pursuits. They were too busy in the exciting world of mercantile progress, and were quite willing to leave it to those who decried that interest to be the self-chosen guardians of 'culture'. They read the newspaper and their interests were in prosaic terms. When literature finally made its way to them, as was inevitable it should do for its own sake, it was through that medium, and in those terms. And for those who stood apart in defence against the unsettling activities of these progressive philistines, the Palladian country house with its natural grounds was a symbol of stable order, both bygone and desired. Their houses were not 'faced with heavily rusticated blocks' like those of the Medici, Pitti, or Strozzi, 'but 'tis the country and the field that furnish it with staff and shield'.

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[21]Pevsner, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

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Before quitting the Italian scene, we might further confirm our parallel by a glance at the character of the architect who designed *palazzi* such as are described above, and are a testimony to his guiding principles. That illustrated here is Palazzo Rucellai in Florence, and its architect Leone Battista Alberti. Pevsner writes of him as follows:

> 'Alberti is the first of the great dilettante-architects, a man of noble birth who first took an interest in art and architecture in the way Count Castiglione demands it from the educated courtier. He wrote a book on painting and one on the art of building (in Latin), and he spent years in Rome studying the ruins of Antiquity. It is obvious that directly the essence of architecture was considered to be philosophy and mathematics (the divine laws of order and proportion) and archaeology (the monuments of Antiquity) the theoretician and the dilettante would assume a new significance. Roman architecture, both system and details, must be studied and drawn to be learnt; and the system behind the styles of Antiquity was soon—with the help of Vitruvius, the newly re-discovered Roman writer on architecture—found to lie in the orders, *i.e.*, the proportions belonging to the Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Composite and Tuscan columns and entablatures'.[22]

We cannot feel that we are far, in this account, from the character of Sir Christopher Wren of the Royal Society. Burckhardt gives a more personal portrait of Alberti:

> 'In three things he desired to appear faultless to others, in walking, in riding, and in speaking. He learned music without a master, and yet his compositions were admired by professional judges. Under the pressure of poverty, he studied both civil and canonical law for many years, till exhaustion brought on a severe illness. In his twenty-fourth year, finding his memory for words weakened, but his sense of facts unimpaired, he set to work at physics and mathematics. And all the while he acquired every sort of accomplishment and dexterity, cross-examining artists, scholars, and artisans of all descriptions, down to the cobblers, about the secrets and peculiarities of their craft. Painting and modelling he practised by the way, and especially excelled in admirable likenesses from memory. Great admiration was excited by his mysterious 'camera obscura', in which he showed at one time the stars and the moon rising over rocky hills, at another wide landscapes with mountains and gulfs receding into dim perspective, with fleets advancing on the waters in shade or sunshine . . . At the sight of noble trees and waving corn-fields he shed tears, handsome and dignified old men he honoured as "a delight of nature", and could never look at them enough. Perfectly formed animals won his goodwill as being specially favoured by nature; and more than once, when he was ill, the sight of a beautiful landscape cured him'.[23]

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[22] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

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There is perhaps here, as well as a portrait of the complete dilettante and amateur investigator a hint of the view of Nature as embodying an ideal of perfect order which I have suggested in the Restoration English view. And of the plan of Palazzo Rucellai itself, Pevsner writes:

> 'The relation of height to width in the rectangular parts of the windows is equal to the relation of height to width in the bays. Thus the position of every detail seems to be determined. No shifting is possible. In this lies, according to Alberti's theoretical writings, the very essence of beauty, which he defines as 'the harmony and concord of all the parts achieved in such a manner that nothing could be added or taken away or altered except for the worse'.[24]

This indicates the completeness of what Pevsner calls 'the principle of an all-pervading order which Alberti postulates in an interior as well'.[25] And if, in England in the period we are considering, 'the principle of an all-pervading order' (in which, as Tawney says, 'movement means disturbance') had withdrawn from the body of society, those who felt it essential to themselves and basic to the nature of things looked for it in the other sphere of Nature, which remained eternally unchanged, and tried also, by every means of artifice at their command, to replace it through the works of their hands.

Professor Pevsner's statement that, in the work of Alberti, 'the essence of architecture was considered to be philosophy and mathematics (the divine laws of order and proportion) *and* archaeology (the monuments of antiquity)' serves to introduce another important aspect of the English Restoration parallel. Having examined the ways in which the English scene was attempting to reinstate the divine laws of order and proportion, it remains to remark the closely related renewal of interest in the monuments of antiquity, as it constituted a full-blown classical revival extending into all branches of culture and entering prominently into literary theory and practice. The interest in the modes of ancient Greece and Rome was the theoretical one of vindicating principles of order and proportion in construction rather than any disinterested investigation of, or admiration for, the old Mediterranean world. This is witnessed by the rapid appearance of the school of the 'Moderns', who claimed that the classical world was not orderly or proportionate enough, and had to be improved upon in this respect. However, the idea of this early world itself had certain felicities to recommend it for Restoration sympathies. It recalled the old world of England before the 'Fall', with its own claim to order; it was, in a sense, a version

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[23]Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, Phaidon Press, Oxford and London, 1945, p. 86.

[24]Pevsner, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 92.

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of Eden. And what was more, it was a stable quantity, since it was a past and completed fact, less likely to change than Nature's laws themselves. So, hopefully Charles II was dubbed 'Augustus' [26] and the ideas of 'Vitruvius, the newly-discovered Roman writer on architecture', whose book had been dedicated to Augustus, were once more revived to affirm the orderly and proportional relationships of Doric to Corinthian. Dryden illustrates the literary liaison in lines from one of his many extravagant eulogies of his various contemporaries:

> Our builders were with want of genius curst;
> The second temple was not like the first;
> Till you, the best Vitruvius, come at length,
> Our beauties equal, but excel our strength.
> Firm Doric pillars found your solid base,
> The fair Corinthian crowns the higher space;
> Thus all below is strength, and all above is grace.[27]

This to Congreve. We need not credit the justice of the appraisal, since Dryden even exceeds his period's fashion for preposterous flattery freely dispensed, and was profligate in bequeathing his laurels, but the lines illustrate the architectural conception as constituting also a conception of literary and dramatic construction, and, being meant as a superlative compliment, reveal the standard of aspiration. If the country set could throw up its *palazzi* in the form of house and grounds, those of the Town could cast theirs in the lines of literature, with carefully formed words as so many building blocks harmoniously disposed, so that 'all below is strength, and all above is grace'. In place of the shattered social pyramid could be set the classical tympanon.

I am aware that this seems a radical analysis of a development which is customarily charted under the title of the 'spread of humanism', the 'growth of Reason', and the 'spirit of enquiry' directed toward the 'rediscovery of the learning and culture of the past'. These phrases are not useless or unrelated, but are too easily worked into schemes presupposing the *in vacuo* march of ideas, with a too inclusive and bright-eyed assumption of constant forward

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[26] Dryden articulates a political parallel:

> 'Thus (under the three Roman Commonwealths) the Roman people were grossly gulled twice or thrice over, and as often enslaved in one century, and under the same pretence of reformation'.

Then:

> 'the Commonwealth was turned into a Monarchy by the conduct and good fortune of Augustus'.

Dedication of the Aeneis, ed. Ker, Vol. II, p. 170.

[27] John Dryden, *To My Dear Friend, Mr. Congreve, On His Comedy Call'd The Double Dealer* (1694).

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movement onward and upward. I would suggest rather that the classical revival, seen in the context of Restoration England, actually represents a conservative reaction within a radical change—as radical as the Civil War was radical, and that though both the progressive mercantile individualistic revolution and the attention to certain aspects of antique culture are legitimately described as partaking of the terms and spirit of the Renaissance, they can profitably be seen as antagonistic within that frame, and the latter as stabilizing and reactionary rather than exploratory and progressive. I stress this because, when we come to looking to the linguistic and literary applications, the attitude or philosophy behind the 'neo-classic' rules and standards is more revealing than the mere fact of the rules themselves.

Of the many available testimonies to this attitude underlying the 'neo-classic' linguistic standard, that given by Edmund Waller is as clear as any, and Waller, member of the Royal Society and of Parliament, called by his contemporaries 'the parent of English verse' and by his epitaph 'inter poetas sui temporis facile princeps', a figure representative enough to deliver it.[28] He writes, *Of English Verse*:

> Poets may boast, as safely vain,
> Their works shall with the world remain;
> Both, bound together, live or die,
> The verses and the prophecy.
>
> But who can hope his line should long
> Last in a daily changing tongue?
> While they are new, envy prevails;
> And as that dies, our language fails.
>
> When architects have done their part,
> The matter may betray their art;
> Time, if we use ill-chosen stone,
> Soon brings a well-built palace down.
>
> Poets that lasting marble seek
> Must carve in Latin, or in Greek;
> We write in sand, our language grows,
> And like the tide, our work o'erflows.

More than merely refinement can be seen to be implied in the terms of Dr. Johnson's translated compliment to Dryden, 'He found our language brick and left it marble'. The point of basing the English language on the Greek and Latin is to stabilize it—to put order and permanence into its flux by building it on the dead languages which were no more liable to change or revolution than were the immutable laws of Nature in the eyes of the Royal Society

[28]Dryden writes of Waller: 'He first made writing easily an art'. *Epistle Dedicatory of The Rival Ladies* (1664), ed. Ker, Vol. I, p. 7.

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or the landscape gardeners.[29] As with the other Restoration trends which we have examined, the remodelling of English on the cut of the classical tongues was an attempted return to the static and the permanently ordered as an antidote to progress, the dynamic social philosophy, and the attack on the old social framework. Waller's verse continued by illustrating how change had damaged Chaucer, and Dryden prefaces his 'translations' of Chaucer with similar sentiments by saying:

> 'The words are given up, as a post not to be defended in our poet, because he wanted the modern art of fortifying'.

Clearly the poets were building their literary *palazzi*.

As I have indicated, far more than merely the English language was in a state of flux, or 'chaos', as it was generally termed. What was felt as shifty and uncertain was a whole way of life and thought, political, religious, social and personal, for these men of the Restoration period, caught as it were between the two worlds of old order and bourgeois progressive individualism. They were split on several of the most fundamental orientations, and though, as Dryden wrote,

> '. . . we live in an age so sceptical that, as it determines little, so it takes nothing from antiquity on trust'.[30]

nevertheless it was not a scepticism of choice but of confusion, and the will, even need, to determine, was strong. Hence there was an element of the classical literature equally congenial and greater in range than merely the stability of the language in which it was written—that was the 'moral centrality' of its content, which is the key to 'classicism' and constitutes the internal determinant of the external form, whose regularity bears only surface testimony to this ordered condition at the heart of the matter. Furthermore, one must bear in mind that this content was of the nature of an *ideal*, a composite abstraction of the admirable qualities which demand

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[29]Of Aeschylus, Dryden says:

> 'In the age of that poet, the Greek tongue was arrived to its full perfection; they had then amongst them an exact standard of writing and speaking; the English language is not capable of such a certainty; and we are at present so far from it, that we are wanting in the very foundations of it, a perfect grammar'. *Preface to Troilus and Cressida* (1679), ed. Ker, Vol. I, p. 203.

Dryden was appointed by the Royal Society in December, 1664, along with Sprat, Evelyn, Waller, and others, to a committee for recommending ways to improve the English language. One contemporary project in stabilization was the compiling of a dictionary which should fix one and only one unequivocal meaning for each English word.

[30]Dryden, *Defence of the Epilogue* (1672) ed. Ker.

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a shying away from the 'incompletion' of realism toward a pattern of general principles.

When we consider the Restoration 'classical revival', however, the invited comparison[31] appears absurd. The Restoration work was, in the worst sense, 'literary' and 'theatrical', directed to a limited public of the *beau-monde* with the professed design 'to please' which generally meant to amuse, distract and compliment. (What is more, the comedy was vulgar and distasteful, centreing around permutations of physical libertinism and the shallowest of *weltanschauungen*—they are most unclassically specialized—while the tragedy, once the unclassical noise and spectacle is removed, leaves us with nothing but elaborate bodiless repetitions of the words Honour, Love, and Duty to attest to its supposedly general nature.) There is little common ground between the comedies and the tragedies unless it be that of providing the most blatant entertainment for a special and increasingly fugitive group, and a comparison with the Greek is absurd.

The Restoration had been deprived of any firmly organized frame of moral reference, since in that sphere as in so many others, the social schism was at work. On the side of the growing Puritan-merchant class, there was that oft-invoked quality, 'bourgeois morality', which soon found its literary ascendency in Joseph Addison.[32] The conservative opposition naturally took the line of *épater le bourgeois*, and the scandal of their exploits perhaps better testifies to the zeal of their opposition than to the intrinsic dissoluteness of their souls. But from the King down, the pattern ran to the type of behaviour described by Beljame:

> 'Sir Charles Sedley, whom Charles II used to call the Viceroy of Apollo, was supping one evening in a London tavern with Lord Buckhurst (later the celebrated Earl of Dorset) and Sir Thomas Ogle. Flown with good food and wine, all three went out on to the balcony, hailed and abused passers-by, and exhibited themselves in the most indecent attitudes. (à Wood states: "Putting down their breeches they excrementiz'd in the street".) Finally, Sedley,

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[31] *e.g.* Dryden, *Examen Poeticum* (1693), ed. Ker, Vol. II, p. 6.

> 'I know, you judge for the English tragedies against the Greek and Latin . . . For if we, or our greater fathers, have not yet brought the drama to an absolute perfection, yet at least we have carried it much further than those ancient Greeks; who, beginning from a chorus, could never totally exclude it, as we have done; etc.'

[32] Late in his career (1697), Dryden writes:

> 'The most ingenious Mr. Addison of Oxford has also been as troublesome to me as the other two, and on the same account'. After his *Bees*, my latter swarm is scarcely worth the hiving'.

Postscript to Translation of Virgil, ed. Ker, Vol. II, p. 244.

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in order to outdo his friends, presented himself stark naked and cut such grossly coarse Rabelaisian capers that the crowd rioted, threw stones, and tried to force an entrance in order to knock him down'.[33]

This was the group for whom the 'heroic tragedies' were composed.[34] Their external lineaments were ordered as much after the classical convention as the frivolity of a novelty-loving audience (or 'spectators', as Dryden said they were more aptly termed) would take, and would have been more strictly so had it been made possible by soberer attention—however, the standard is constantly invoked.[35] It was not too difficult to supply this order on the surface of the work, but as to that conception of an inner moral ordering which dictated the original classical lines, the state of mind represented by the above account—a temper and pattern which included the King himself but was despised by many of his own group as well as by the growing bourgeoisie which it was designed to oppose—could hardly be expected to include such a universal frame. And not only was this taking place in the very terms of the political state, but the other official organ of a moral order, the church was con-

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[33]Alexandre Beljame, trans. Lorimer, ed. Dobrée, *Men of Letters and the English Public in the Eighteenth Century*, 1660-1744, London, Kegan Paul, 1948, p. 5.

[34]Dryden:

'The favour which heroic plays have lately found upon our theatres has been wholly derived to them from the countenance and approbation they have received at Court'.

[35]Dryden, *Preface to the Fables* (1700), ed. Ker, Vol. II, p. 270.

'. . . only it includes a greater length of time, as taking up seven years at least, but Aristotle has left undecided the duration of the action, which yet is easily reduced into the compass of a year by a narration of what preceded the return of Palamon to Athens'.

We recall, in noting the reverence here for Aristotle, Dryden's contrasting scorn for that same Aristotle in his verses to the Royal Society, where Aristotle is called the Stagirite to whose 'tyranny . . . our ancestors betray'd their free-born reason'. The reconciliation of this contradiction is instructive. The latter case represents faith in the intrinsic order of Nature empirically observed as against the mental 'scholasticism' which leads to disputation on vague and unverifiable grounds, such as Puritan 'inner light'. The approval is registered, not for Aristotle's approach to Nature, but to artifice—in this case, the dramatic or literary—where he is understood to prescribe a strict order and proportioning. In each instance Dryden's case is for stability and desire for order; the two apparently conflicting aspects are interestingly analogous to the co-presence of the natural grounds with the proportioned and formal artifice of the country house, already discussed.

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comitantly divided, so that this little battle of public morality was only putting in other terms the division of royal church against dissent.

The actual effect, however, of this neo-classic trend, was to focus primary attention on the formal element, with the accent on the ordering of externals, since that was always feasible for the craftsman whatever the state of his philosophy. This amounted to an exaltation of manner over matter, and with it that deadening self-consciousness of the medium itself which damages so many attempts at 'creative' production in our own day no less than in Dryden's. As to the content of—say, the tragedies—so long as it was noble and abstract, which was judged to be the classical example, and ordered into a pattern some general issues, no more was asked of it, and in fact, everything else would have been condemned. The fact that the pattern behind Greek tragedies comprised the most deep-seated myths of their people while that of the Restoration tragedies was the vapid arrangement by any self-appointed 'man of letters' of a few empty and unexplored generalities never deterred Dryden from making comparisons of the two on the same grounds, and even finding in favour of his own, as exhibiting 'greater perfection'. However, the disparity between the second temple and the first can be seen to exist on such a fundamental level that far more than Mr. Congreve would be required to put it right.

With this background understood, then, we can see the Restoration products as designed in line with Horace's *prodesse et delectare*—in Dryden's phrase, the rule that 'to instruct delightfully is the general end of all poetry.[36] As I have noted, the Restoration reversed this order of emphasis, but it is still worth examining in the actual work the attempt at *prodesse* which is so constantly attested to in the various contemporary critical defences. As to the comedies, their emphasis was more on *delectare*, but they are certainly also extended instructions on the etiquette of being a proper member of the *beau-monde* and the absurdity of being anything else. The instruction of the tragedies is assumed to be in larger terms, but comes down to the same thing. If the moral structure underlying great tragedy was not available to these men, one simple ideal was clearly present and all-important, as I have indicated in other fields—the necessity of an embracing monarchy. If instruction in this was not needed by the Royalist group who attended the theatre and read the poetry, at least an affirmation of it was pleasant. When later, after about 1680, their fortunes had declined, and a generous part of the audience were antagonistic Whigs, propagandistic instruction *was* needed, and comprised such lines as:

> . . . Learn here the greatest Tyrant
> Is to be chose before the least Rebellion,

from Crowne's *The Misery of Civil War*, or:

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[36]Dryden, *Preface to Troilus and Cressida*, ed. Ker, Vol. I, p. 209.

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> . . . This Maxim still
> Shall be my Guide (*A Prince can do no ill*!)
> In spight of Slaves, his Genius let him trust;
> For Heav'n ne'er made a King, but made him just[37]

from Bankes' *Vertue Betray'd*. In the earlier 'heroic tragedies' the pattern is not made so obvious because of the absence of controversy, and is carried out even more in abstractions, but is no different. The Restoration playmakers did not exercise their classical imitation by ordering *any* general issues into *any* pattern, but conventionally pitted the abstraction of Love against that of Honour, with a view to ennobling their hero by showing him willing to sacrifice in the end the private passion of Love for the Honour of the general public duty. Thus the Love-Honour conflict is the issue of private versus public orientation. We might summon Waller's lines 'upon the Earl of Roscommon's Translation of Horace':

> But where a brave, a public action shines,
> That he rewards with his immortal lines.
> Whether it be in council or in fight,
> His country's honour is his chief delight.

To continue from Waller, the protagonists of Restoration tragedies can well be described as:

> Law-giving heroes, fam'd for taming brutes,
> And raising cities with their charming lutes;
> For rudest minds with harmony were caught,
> And civil life was by the Muses taught.
> So wand'ring bees would perish in the air,
> Did not a sound, proportion'd to their ear,
> Appease their rage, invite them to the hive,
> Unite their force, and teach them how to thrive,
> To rob the flow'rs, and to forbear the spoil.

The type of civil life to be taught was not one to the encouragement of private enterprise, but an invitation to the hive where they may be united in the cells of a central order. Thus the decorum of the subject matter in heroic tragedy was the classical sentiment *dulce et decorum pro patria mori*, with the obligations to *patria* clearly defined. The individual interest, the private light, the personal perception, had to be sacrificed to the general order—a choice had to be made, since it was just these, the private dissenting religion and the individualistic economic spoiler who had overturned that order in civil war, and who were still steadily pulling it apart. Thus when Fletcher's Philaster is seen 'wounding his mistress, and afterwards his boy, to save himself' he is violating, according to Dryden, 'that which they call *the decorum of the stage*', in which the Elizabethans were not instructed. His brutal self-interest is termed 'indecent', so he is censured as providing no fit ideal. We are not

[37]Quoted in Beljame, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

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to look at Philaster, for example, as a living creature with natural urges, but as a hero—that is, as a paragraph from a book of ethical etiquette, an abstract of recommended qualities delivered after a prescribed convention. It is small wonder that plays constructed after such principles had to rely heavily on spectacle and noise, verbal and otherwise, to supply the interest and attract the attention. It is easy to see that there was little impulse toward the Romantic—that is, the enquiring, exploratory, unknown, specific, or individual—but ample reason has been indicated for the unpopularity of such qualities amongst the shaky conservatives. We see, rather, a new set of terms for the schism—the *private* or *individual* versus the *public*. There can no longer be an identification of the two. On the other hand, 'classical' is far from a deserved alternative, and if 'neo-classical' is used instead, it should only be considered as shorthand for artificial, abstract, and conventionally patterned with generally propagandistic intent.

HAROLD WENDELL SMITH.

Note: Related essays by Mr. Smith, parts of the same book, have appeared in *Scrutiny*, Vol. XVIII, Nos. 2, 3 and 4.

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'KING LEAR' (III)

AT the stage we have now reached in our analysis of *King Lear* —the conclusion of the central tempest episode—it is difficult not to feel that Shakespeare was faced by an artistic problem of tremendous difficulty: the problem, that is, of balancing the disruption so thoroughly traced in the first part of he play by a corresponding harmony in the second. Neither morally nor artistically could the remaining Acts be allowed merely to continue in the spirit of their predecessors. The very intensity of the pressure, material and spiritual, to which Lear and those around him have been subjected during the tempest calls at this stage for a compensatory reaction of the kind already anticipated, in the form of broken hints, in the later stages of their exposure to the elements. The assimilation of these hints into a positive moral conception, through the gradual development of a pattern of significant imagery linking the various related themes with which the play is concerned, is the purpose of the last part of the tragedy.

The reaction, indeed, begins to take shape almost immediately. The blinding of Gloucester (III, vii) represents, as we have seen, the lowest depth reached in terms of physical action as a result of man's subjection to the bestial elements in his nature. The series of episodes which leads up to Lear's final reconciliation with Cordelia—in some ways the most ample and varied in content of the whole play—balances against a continued sense of almost intolerable strain new emotional power of a more constructive kind. The end of the storm is followed by a kind of lull in the emotional development of the tragedy, perhaps the only possible transition from the unchecked savagery we have just witnessed to another mood. With the reappearance of Edgar, whose frequent changes of disguise and spirit invariably reflect successive stages in the development of the play, misery seems to pass into a tired resignation to the worst. As Edgar himself put it in the course of an utterance clearly intended, like the similar speech of Ross in *Macbeth*,[1] to mark a point of balance in the unfolding of the action—

> The lamentable change is from the best;
> The worst returns to laughter.

The connection between this mood of exhaustion and the events recently witnessed by Edgar is clear enough. A closer reading, however, reveals that the bitter irony suggested in 'laughter', although evidently a direct reaction to recent experience, does not stand alone. The speech has, in fact, a definite positive content. More clearly than ever before, it lays stress upon the advantages of

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1 Things at the worst will cease, or else climb upward
To what they were before. (IV, ii)

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the self-knowledge to be gained from adversity, and so confers universal relevance upon the process of moral illumination we have seen taking place in Lear himself since the beginning of the play:

> Yet better thus, and known to be contemn'd,
> Than still contemn'd and flatter'd.

Lear, as we have seen, brought his own tragedy upon himself by submitting to 'flattery' from the very daughters who 'contemned' him. Since then, his own bitter experiences, culminating in his exposure to the elements, have converted him into one 'known to be contemn'd', and Edgar—in spite of all his sufferings—is confident that it is 'better' so. To be 'worst', to be blown by 'blasts' material and spiritual, like those which have so recently concerned us, unto the 'worst'—the double stressing of the word is not accidental—is still, by a strangely vital paradox to stand 'in esperance', to be freed from illusion. The 'worst', in other words, is at least as much a turning-point as an end, a beginning of conceivable conquests in the personal order as an approximation to the limits, physical and moral, of human endurance.

It is against the background of this new conception, indeed, that the process of moral clarification with which this Act is more particularly concerned begins to take shape. Its starting-point is, typically, a fresh exposure to tragic experience. Edgar's opening assertion, for all its importance, is still relatively 'philosophical', abstract, and the appearance, immediately after it, of his blind and abandoned father serves to put its validity to the test. Confronted with Gloucester, he takes up again the very conception of the 'worst' which he has just used as the basis for the definition of an outlook not ultimately despairing, and appears to repudiate his previous limited affirmation of confidence:

> O Gods! Who is't can say 'I am at the worst'?
> I am worse than e'er I was . . .
> And worse I may be yet: the worse is not
> So long as we can say 'This is the worst'.

Exposure to tragic circumstance seems at this point, by opposing harsh reality to the first tentative suggestions of moral recovery, to have brought us once more to the depth of pessimism; and yet, although Edgar's despair is real enough, a necessary part of the total effect, his very capacity to register new depths of suffering indicates that his subjection to adversity is not, spiritually speaking, final. His words, in fact, leave the way open for a possible development into deeper understanding which is to be fully treated in the ensuing action. 'The worst is not . . .'; by refusing, against all appearances, to accept as ultimate his state of affliction, Edgar broadens decisively the moral horizon of the play, indicates a possible extension of the pattern of experience, and lays the preliminary foundations of a positive reaction.

This reaction, however, needs to be traced through its various

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stages in terms of personal development, calls for assimilation into the structure of the tragedy. Having been announced by Edgar, it begins to acquire consistency by a most illuminating parallel with Lear's earlier development, in the growing moral insight of his father. Like Lear when he showed himself concerned for the well-being of his companions in the storm, Gloucester now reveals a new interest in the situation of those around him. He tells the old man who has so far been his companion to leave him, who is in any case beyond consolation, because otherwise he may himself be exposed to danger. Still more important than this gesture of selflessness, because more universal in its implications, is the realization that the very sufferings which have culminated in his blinding have deepened his moral insight:

> I stumbled when I saw: full oft 't is seen,
> Our means secure us, and our mere defects
> Prove our commodities.

It is typical of the characters of *King Lear* at this stage to turn their particular experiences into general statements, as though contributing within the limits of their growing understanding to what is coming to be in increasing measure less the acting of a set of personal tragedies than a statement about the moral implications of human nature. Gloucester in this respect is only following a general rule, only corresponding in the light of his recently acquired self-knowledge to the attitude put forward in more speculative terms by his son. 'Our means'—so he tells us, generalizing from his own experience—lull us often into a false sense of security, whilst our very lack of them—our 'defects', underlined by such subjection to adversity as Edgar himself has just registered—may help to preserve us from the worst spiritual consequences of our normal complacency. The fundamental contradiction in Gloucester's history between physical sight and moral blindness is now related to his new understanding that contact, even by 'touch', with the 'dear son' whom in his folly he lost can still be more precious than all that sight can give.

This decisive growth in moral insight represents a new stage in Gloucester's incorporation into the tragic design. It prepares the way, above all, for him to assume his own place—as a subsidiary but essential figure—in the pattern of reconciliation. For him, indeed, as previously for Lear in the tempest,[2] the encounter at this point with Edgar in disguise is of outstanding importance. The two meetings are explicitly connected. Reflecting on the 'madman and beggar' whom he still does not know to be his son, Gloucester recalls his previous contact with 'poor Tom' in the tempest. In particular, he dwells upon the impression of nakedness which has led him—in a phrase which clearly echoes Lear's 'unaccommodated man'—to 'think a man a worm'. Nudity, indeed, which we have already found to be a main theme of the play, is now continually

[2]Act III, scene iv.

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in Gloucester's mind. Speaking of Edgar, he stresses it three times in a few lines—'*naked* fellow', '*naked* soul', and again 'naked fellow'—at the same time as he sees a symbol of the times in the leading of the blind by a madman. The contemplation of wretchedness, however, which produced so decisive an extension of Lear's moral understanding, is now associated with Gloucester's fresh sense of filial tenderness to produce emotions of a new kind, to which Edgar in turn responds. The spectacle of the old man's misery brings his son to the limits of bearable emotion—'I cannot daub it further'—whilst the thought of the beggar whom he is now unable to see but who recalls his experience of the previous night is associated for Gloucester with memories of his lost child and of the truths so recently and so bitterly learnt:

> my son
> Came then into my mind, and yet my mind
> Was then scarce friends with him: I have heard more since.

Father and son, thus brought together by the very tragic process which their separation initiated, are thus placed in a position to contribute their growing experience to the pattern of moral consciousness with which the play is now concerned.

That Gloucester's story is now in process of integration into the play's general statement, simultaneously developed from individual experience, of universal values is further confirmed at this point by his taking up Lear's own theme, itself closely associated with the contemplation of nakedness, of justice and its place in the world. The distinctively royal preoccupation is thus reinforced from a more particular, personal standpoint. Echoing the King's previous exposure of the 'superfluous and lust-dieted man', Gloucester unites the ideas of 'blood' and luxury in a common denunciation and looks forward to the revolutionary process of adjustment—if we may call it so without implying political meanings of an unduly limited kind—by which

> distribution should undo excess
> And each man have enough.

Once more, personal insight and social considerations stand in the closest relationship. If it is true that the plight of Gloucester himself and that of the 'madman', his son, are individual symptoms of the universal disorder with the public manifestations of which Lear, as King and source of 'natural' authority, is particularly concerned —for ''T is the time's plague, when madmen lead the blind'—it is equally true that the excesses of the acquisitive passion have their roots ultimately in personal cravings, can be ascribed in the last analysis to a lack of natural feeling similar to the passion-driven egoism which prompts 'unnatural' children to expose their parents to indigence and torture. The social situation, in short, is now more intimately related than ever before to a moral flaw, to the

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inversion of 'natural' order in the personal sphere. The evil exercise of power on a public scale proceeds from the man

> that will not see
> Because he does not feel,

whose pretensions to clear-sighted vision cover blindness to the need for human sympathy which the sufferings of Lear and Gloucester have awakened in their hearts. From the temptation to apply to experience that particular kind of blindness the latter, in fact, in spite of his loss of sight, has been decisively delivered.

In the light of this new spirit of compassion, which finds external expression in the gift of a purse to Edgar, Gloucester moves on to the great moral decision which will decide whether he can face the pressure of hostile circumstances or whether he will be reduced to evade the sufferings imposed upon him by suicide. For him, as for the other tragic figures of this play, it remains to be seen whether exposure to the limits of human endurance will lead to moral rebirth or merely to extinction. His last words, before being led off by his disguised son, look forward for the first time to the choice which awaits him, where Cordelia also expects Lear, at Dover. The full implications of this choice will only there, at the moment of resolution to which the whole action now tends, be apparent; but already the invocation of the 'cliff whose high and bending head' inclines 'fearfully' towards the 'confined deep' stresses, by its introduction of a deliberately poetic overtone, that fundamental spiritual issues are involved. As in the case of Hamlet when about to meet his father's spirit (I, iv), the description contains a symbol of the dangerous, giddy heights of the spirit to which Gloucester is shortly to be led. We know now, however, that he will not face them alone. At the end of the scene, father and son are once more united (though Gloucester, of course, does not yet know this); and the restoration, on what is now the road to Dover, of this most natural of relationships already implies a decisive reversal of the opening cleavage. It anticipates, in its own sphere, the re-establishment of full harmony between Lear and Cordelia and fairly balances, in Gloucester's own story, the sense of human helplessness implied in the association of the supposedly mad and the genuinely blind.

The second scene, moving back once more to Lear's enemies, balances this intimation of restored harmony with a corresponding disunity. The suggestion of divisions existing between the two kingdoms into which Lear has divided his inheritance has been present as a secondary theme throughout the tempest episode. Kent from the very first speaks of 'division', covered indeed by 'mutual cunning', between Albany and Cornwall; whilst Gloucester, not long after (III, ii), refers to 'division 'twixt the dukes', and, with deliberate indirectness, to 'a worse matter than that'. This break in unity, hitherto merely hinted at as a remote consequence of passionate dedication to the craving for power, is now given an explicit place in the growing pattern of the play. Itself part of a

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natural process, the inevitable consequence on the public side of Lear's abdication of his responsibilities as royal guarantor of unity, the impulse which brings it from possibility to open reality is, as once more we may expect, the satisfaction of egoistic appetite. At this point, indeed, the motives which have already impelled Goneril to a disregard of the natural bonds of the family begin to operate to the ruin of her own prosperity. Her love for Edmund and her contempt for her husband ('My fool usurps my body': the physical intensity is noteworthy) are related by Albany, when he appears, to an overthrow, prompted by passion of the normal order of nature:

> That nature which contemns its origin
> Cannot be bordered certain in itself;
> She that herself will sliver and disbranch
> From her material sap, perforce must wither
> And come to deadly use.

In these words Goneril's actions are explicitly related to the general theme. She has herself been 'disbranched' by the passionate following of self-interest from the family tree and her husband's protest indicates for the first time the 'deadly use' to which her disruptive energies must finally bring her.

The nature of this 'deadly use', indeed, and its relationship to the entire tragic process, are not long in declaring themselves. Appalled by the surface frigidity with which his wife follows her purposes Albany takes up the imagery of the beast of prey so characteristic of the play. By so doing, he gives full dramatic projection for the first time to the theme originally introduced by Lear in his apostrophe against 'filial ingratitude'.[4] 'Tigers, not daughters', he exclaims, and proceeds to invoke a dimly conceived heavenly justice to prevent the disruption that is in fact taking place under his eyes. Without the check upon these 'vile offences' which only the operation of this justice can impose,

> Humanity must perforce prey on itself,
> Like monsters of the deep.

His own indignation, indeed, although held in check by a sense of moral control which gives it increased weight, immediately confirms this when it leads him to turn upon his wife in language that itself suggests the beast:

> Were't my fitness
> To let these hands obey my blood,
> They are apt enough to *dislocate* and *tear*
> Thy flesh and bones.

At this moment, as though to confirm the relationship between Albany's outburst and possible human behaviour, news is brought

[4]Act III, scene iv.

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in of Cornwall's death and the blinding of Gloucester, and the scene ends with persistent evocation of the victim's lost eyes. The torture inflicted upon Gloucester and Goneril's passion for Edmund are, in fact, parts of a single sinister process. The development of *Macbeth* is being repeated on a vaster and even more appalling scale; evil, having first undermined the foundations of order upon natural dependence, proceeds to destroy itself.

Even more important at this stage than the unmasking of Goneril is the reappearance of Cordelia, who introduces a type of poetry which, although it scarcely springs from anything yet noted in the play, at once assumes an essential part in it. It is, indeed, the very expression of 'nature' as confirmed and deepened by exposure to tragic experience, and serves, as such, as point of reference to the broken and partial emotions which dominate the remaining characters of the play. Cordelia is first introduced (IV, iii) in the description of a Gentleman, whose words initiate a harmonizing and healing element to balance the cruelty which has so far prevailed in the tragic action. His account of Cordelia's grief is, among other things, a remarkable example of the way in which great mastery of verse and language lends significance to dramatic action. The technique already approaches that of Shakespeare's latest work, weaving many apparently different sets of associations into a complex final effect which only gradually emerges from the description. The 'tears' which spring, in the Gentleman's words, from Cordelia's eyes are given a quality of their own by being described as 'ample' and by being connected with her 'delicate' cheek; when we read, in addition, that they 'trill'd down', sound and meaning combine to imply that they are less due to harsh pain of the type to which all the characters of this play have so far been unremittingly exposed than to be the products evoked by subjection to such sorrow of natural and gentle feeling. As such they are compatible with a definite regal dignity in her who weeps them, who is a 'queen' not only in title as wife of the King of France, but—unlike Lear—over her own nature,

> Over her passion, who most rebel-like
> Sought to be king over her.

The queenliness of Cordelia, in other words, stands out in contrast to her father's passion-torn regality, as a complete, harmonious unity to its broken and disrupted parts. As such, it gives fulfilment in dramatic terms to the royal side of Lear's divided nature, just as Goneril brings consistency to its passionate, wilful aspect. Where Lear's emotions, unrelated to a central norm of 'natural' behaviour, well up from below either in the form of jealous intolerance, *hysterica passio*, or—at a later stage—of generous and impulsive identification with those who suffer, Cordelia's are balanced and controlled. The harmony of her being, in other words, due to her conformity to 'nature' itself, is of the kind that only the king-queen antithesis of these lines can adequately express. Her passion, not less intense than Goneril's destructive savagery, is in the full sense of the word

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regal, but the queenly gentleness which presides over it, keeps it within its established orbit.

It is in the main description which follows, however, that the verse attains its full complexity:

> . . . patience and sorrow strove
> Who should express her goodliest. You have seen
> Sunshine and rain at once: her smiles and tears
> Were like a better way: those happy smilets
> That play'd on her ripe lip seem'd not to know
> What guests were in her eyes; which parted thence
> As pearls from diamonds dropp'd.

One is struck at once by the tremendous range of imagery at the poet's disposal. Cordelia's sorrow is expressed in a whole series of comparisons, few of which have a plain factual connection with the scene and emotions described; 'sunshine and rain', 'ripe lip', 'guests', 'pearls' and 'diamonds' are all connected with one another and with Cordelia less on account of any visual image than because of the sense of value, of richness and fertility which they impart. For the passage is moved by a presiding logic of its own. The struggle between the queen and her passions, referred to above, is now seen to be a strife between two emotions—'patience' and 'sorrow'—equally natural and worthy, each contributing to a 'goodly' expression of her nature. Her behaviour, in fact, is so normal, so spontaneous a manifestation of her virtues, that it reflects the balance of nature in 'sunshine' and 'rain', each contributing to the single harmonious effect which presents itself as a 'better way', an indication of redemption; and this in turn causes us to feel no surprise when 'happy smilets' make their appearance, immediately below, as indicative of Cordelia's mood. 'Sunshine and rain', in turn, lead directly to the suggestion in 'ripe' of the maturing crops, and 'guests'—as in the First Act of *Macbeth*—hints at the bounty which expresses itself in hospitality. Ripeness, in turn, indicates the riches implied in 'pearls from diamonds dropp'd'; these are 'rarities', and sorrow itself is in such a case less a tragic manifestation than a rarity enriching human nature, part of a harmony capable of being summed up in the musical terms already suggested in the phrase 'an ample tear trill'd down' and of being, in the most spiritual sense, 'beloved'. Last of all, by a final step profoundly characteristic of Shakespeare's late verse, Cordelia's tears become 'holy water' dropping from her 'heavenly eyes' and the poetical transformation of natural human emotion into its spiritual distillation is complete.

To the norm of harmonious completeness thus established, the broken and partial experience of the remaining tragic figures looks as to its distant fulfilment. Of this experience Lear's own state is the most finished expression and it is therefore fitting that Cordelia's re-entry into the action should find its anticipated response, through Kent's words in the same scene, in the form of a change in the quality of her father's emotion, the result of his development under

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the pressure of the storm. By the end of the tempest, indeed, as we have seen, Lear has been brought from the wounded selfishness of the passion-driven animal to a definite *moral* consciousness of the terrible wound caused by suffering in human nature. With his wanderings over, his condition, no longer dominated by mere 'blood', has become such that it is ready for the 'balm' of 'broken sinews'; for the first time there seem to be indications of a possible harmony beyond his torture. This development opens new opportunities for the poetic expression of his sufferings which are realized, more concretely than hitherto, in Kent's account of his master's condition after his arrival at Dover:

> A sovereign shame so elbows him: his own unkindness
> That stripp'd her from his benediction, turn'd her
> To foreign casualties, gave her dear rights
> To his dog-hearted daughters: these things sting
> His mind so venomously that burning shame
> Detains him from Cordelia.

The changed quality of Lear's suffering is reflected in a new type of poetry, the natural response of his chastened humanity to the possibilities of transfiguration symbolized in Cordelia. The storm, with its sense of division, of the human body physically torn apart on the rack or defenceless under the teeth of beasts of prey, is superseded by a pain which is still intense but which may be the prelude to restoration. Not only is his shame for his own past folly 'sovereign', at once the reaction of a king and his most rich and valuable emotion: not only is Lear's past 'unkindness (in the sense of neglect of kinship) opposed to the harmony implied in the 'benediction' of which in the past he ruthlessly 'stripp'd his daughter and to the possibility of which he is now painfully feeling his way back; but 'sting', 'venomously', and 'burning shame' suggest the cauterizing of a wound, as though his grief possessed a possible healing quality, were a necessary prelude to restoration. Read in conjunction with the overflowing fulness of Cordelia's emotion just described, Kent's speech indicates that Shakespeare intends to balance the anarchy and cruelty of the first part of the play by a reconciliation of father and daughter in a natural and harmonious sublimation of their normal relationship.

The central 'normality' of Cordelia having been thus established, the rest of the Act proceeds by stages to incorporate into its completeness the various partial illuminations produced by subjection to tragic experience. Before the final reconciliation can take place, however, 'the eye of anguish' in Lear has to be closed, and this (as the next scene—IV, iv—in which Cordelia herself makes her appearance shows) is to be the work of 'repose'. Already in *Macbeth* Shakespeare had used sleep to indicate the renewal of the complete man in his rest; and the Doctor in Cordelia's camp, like his predecessor at Dunsinane, combines a spiritual ministry with his function in a similar way. Once again the pressure of a new

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harmonizing content can be detected in an extension of the field of poetic imagery. To assist the beneficent effects of sleep, Cordelia desires the use of all the 'unpublished virtues of the earth', praying that they may spring from her tears; this explicit relation of grief to fertility, besides carrying on a connection already established, confirms the new quality in Lear's royal distress. The sorrows into which father and daughter have been plunged by the disruption of the 'natural' family bond are now to bear fruit in a new and equally natural field of expression. Even the fact that Lear has been found crowned with the 'idle weeds' that grow 'in our sustaining corn' has its own symbolic meaning. The 'weeds', now firmly defined as 'idle', superfluous, are the evil that grows together with the 'sustaining corn', and this in turn suggests the harmonious, positive forces felt to be gathering strength for the final resolution. That Lear is to be searched for in 'the high-grown field' is itself an indication of the ripeness and fertility that are associated with Cordelia's camp.

After a short scene between Regan and Oswald (IV, v), which confirms in terms of feeling and action alike the spirit of the divisions introduced by passion in the camp of Cordela's enemies, we come in the last two episodes of this Act to the culminating moment for which the whole action of the play since the end of the storm has been a preparation. Before the meeting of Cordelia and the regenerated Lear, in which the new symbolic note of reconciliation touches its fulfilment, Shakespeare turns back once more to take up, and in a sense to summarize, his presentation of human suffering. The external purpose, so to call it, of the scene (IV,vi) is the bringing together, after their common subjection to the tempest, of Lear and Gloucester. When it opens, Gloucester has been brought to the limits of his endurance. The setting of the scene has already been anticipated,[5] and the symbolic associations both of the cliff and of the 'confined deep' into which it so 'fearfully' looks is now fully developed. The fact that Gloucester's lofty perch is imaginary, that its 'dizzy' heights exist only in Edgar's imagination, emphasize still further the symbolic quality of the description. The connection of vast heights with the turning of the mind—

> I'll look no more,
> Lest my brain turn and the deficient sight
> Topple down headlong—

is clearly significant; the deficiency of human sight reflects a moral as well as a physical situation, and Gloucester himself is obviously on the 'extreme verge' both of his spiritual resources and of utter exhaustion. That the 'murmuring surge' so keenly evoked by Edgar is related to the position in which the mind finds itself in this play is confirmed by the fact that Lear himself has recently been described as 'mad as the vex'd sea'; in both cases, the frailty of man is set before an intuition of infinity which at once terrifies and, if accepted,

[5]Act IV, scene i.

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ennobles. Gloucester's nature is, in fact, to use Regan's earlier phrase, applied in a very different spirit to Lear (II, iv), 'on the very verge of her confine' and any further stretching of him upon the rack of suffering can only lead to dissolution; yet—and here we have the other side of the picture—only by being so led to 'the verge', the limit of possible experience, the frontiers on which life and death, hope and despair, sanity and madness meet, may he be morally healed. This Edgar stresses when he affirms—

> Why I do trifle thus with his despair
> Is done to cure it.

In this way the emphasis upon passive acceptance so marked in the earlier scenes of this Act is undergoing a subtle transformation. What was still, at the end of the tempest, a submission to bitter and incomprehensible realities is now in the process of acquiring meaning, of becoming a design in which the 'gods', repeatedly if shadowily invoked at this stage in the play, have their part to play. This assertion of the relevance of the 'gods' serves as a bridge to connect the exhausted resignation of Lear and Gloucester with the regenerating poetry of Cordelia.

Gloucester, in fact, kneeling—or so he thinks—on the very edge of the void, and after confirming his precious gesture of generosity by the gift of a purse to his guide, invokes these same 'gods' as witnesses to his renunciation of the 'world'. He states, indeed, that his decision is determined by the desire to shake off his great 'affliction'; but it is a decision taken 'patiently', in submission to what is recognized, however obscurely, as a superior power, and the motive behind it is, significantly, a determination not to question further the ultimate order of reality:

> If I could bear it further and not fall
> To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,
> My snuff and loathed part of nature should
> Burn itself out.

Such an attitude clearly implies no break in continuity, no facile reversal of the despairing mood which Gloucester's earlier sufferings have imposed upon him. The purposes of the 'gods' are still inscrutable, still—to his vision—intolerably and gratuitously cruel:

> As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods;
> They kill us for their sport. (IV, i)

There is nothing in the speaker's words, here or elsewhere at this stage, to imply a modification of his earlier bitterness. The confidence in spiritual purpose which comes naturally to Cordelia, for which her consistent attitude from the beginning and the entirely separate sources of her poetry have been a preparation, can clearly be no part, here or ever, of Gloucester's mind. His reactions, combining passive acceptance with an admission of past folly, can only be regarded as a preliminary step in the preparation of the positive vision.

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The moment in which Gloucester jumps forward, as he thinks, to certain annihilation clearly marks a transitional moment in the conception of the play. His action is inspired by despair, a reaction against the dizzy spiritual heights to which his earlier sufferings have brought him and for which his time-serving worldliness has proved no preparation. This despair, a one-sided if natural extension of the pessimism imposed upon him by circumstance can only be cured by exposure to the crisis induced by his son, of which his 'leap' is the external symbol. Having made it, and finding himself inexplicably alive, he has passed the danger-point and, from this moment, his whole attitude begins to change. His first reaction, indeed, is one of frustration and, as such, looks back to the past. Preceded by the pathetic 'I have no eyes' with which he replies to Edgar's injunction to 'look up a-height', to see, in the eye of his imagination, the peril which he has safely passed and to which the reference to the 'shrill-gorged lark' gives a certain transforming quality, it finds expression in his instinctive complaint:

> Is wretchedness deprived itself that benefit,
> To end itself by death?

Before long, however, Edgar's fantastic account of the 'fiend' who, as he affirms, stood by Gloucester on the cliff transforms the sense of the episode. The fiend is clearly the symbol of Gloucester's own despair expressed in nightmare form, and the saving of his life is ascribed, more clearly than ever before, to the '*clearest* gods'—

> who make them honours
> Of man's impossibilities,

who alone have a full grasp of the spiritual issues involved and for whom even suffering such as Gloucester's may be an instrument of salvation. Gloucester himself, although in no position to affirm his full acquiescence, declares that he has learnt his lesson:

> henceforth I'll bear
> Affliction till it do cry out itself
> 'Enough, enough' and die.

This, no doubt, is still less a positive attitude than the preliminary foundation upon which such an attitude may be built. Gloucester's words contain as yet nothing to connect him with the positive experience which will emerge from the entirely different spirit of the reconciliation scene; but the thoughts which will henceforth occupy him, 'free' because liberated from the baser temptations of despair and 'patient' because acceptance, even in obscurity, is the necessary prelude to understanding, have their own place in the development of the play.

Before we pass on, however, to the reconciliation episode towards which the whole of this part of the play has been leading, Gloucester has to be brought once more into contact with King Lear. The spiritual development we have just traced in him needs, indeed,

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to be seen as a background to this meeting, a means of assimilating the anguish to which Lear himself, as the central tragic figure of the play, now gives final expression in his madness. Throughout the King's behaviour in this episode insight and distortion, growth in moral understanding and warped resentment, stand in the closest relationship. His first utterance stresses his position as king—'I am the king himself', followed a little later by 'every inch a king'—and recalls the days in which he had soldiers at his command and falcons at his wrist; but side by side with this, as an element profoundly modifying his original egoism, is an entirely new concentration upon the petty helplessness of 'unaccommodated man'. This concentration, as we know, has its roots in personal experience. Looking back upon his past behaviour in the light of intense suffering and exposure to the elements Lear now understands that, in the days of his apparent authority, he had been flattered 'like a dog' and that this flattery had produced the folly which led to his undoing. 'When the rain came to wet me once and the wind to make me chatter; when the thunder would not cease at my bidding; there I found 'em, there I smelt them out'. The unbalancing of Lear's mind has been accompanied by a remarkable growth in self-knowledge, and this in turn is now leading him to interpret afresh the world around him in a way which, mad, inverted, and even savage as it is, combines with Gloucester's new outlook to throw new light upon the human situation.

From this statement of the true nature of his royalty, Lear passes to take up once more the theme, already touched upon and generally associated with the 'thunder' in which the obscure divine purposes find their executive instrument, of 'justice'. Lear, as King, feels himself called upon to judge, and the judgment that he now passes is the product of the experiences he has undergone. As such it is a remarkable mixture of genuine moral indignation and passion-driven resentment. His first few words—'Thou shalt not die: die for adultery! No'—take us directly to the sources of passion, to the dark places from which reason is excluded but from which such behaviour as that of Goneril and Regan, for all its appearance of cool self-interest, finally springs. The speech in which Lear develops his denunciation of the effects of 'blood'—inspired passion is, indeed, a lunatic aberration from the norm of human feeling which amounts in its broken intensity to an obsession; but it is also his reaction to a true situation produced by sinister realities in human nature. It needs in fact to be read with an eye upon the intrigue developed in parallel scenes, and at this very moment taking shape, between his two elder daughters and Edmund. This now appears to the mad King as no more than an extreme example of tendencies rooted in much of what, under ordinary circumstances, passes as normal human nature. Behind it lies the universal presence of the beast in man, to which so much in this play—including Lear's own past behaviour—testifies. Developed by him through such images as the 'soiled horse', in which rich feeding and wantonness are associated in the prevailing impression of bestiality, and through the reference

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to 'riotous appetite', his reaction to the unnatural behaviour of his daughters universalizes itself, to take shape finally in the concluding assertion of the double nature of woman:

> Down from the waist they are centaurs,
> Though women all above:
> But to the girdle do the gods inherit,
> The rest is all the fiends'.

The introduction at this stage of the 'fiends' has been anticipated, during the storm scenes, by Edgar's repeated references to the 'foul fiends', also associated with lust. The light thus thrown upon the dark and hidden nature of man's impulses also illuminates Lear's own situation. It leads finally to his desire to 'sweeten' his imagination when confronted with behaviour which, like his own hand, 'smells of mortality'. In his madness, he is penetrating far more deeply than ever in his previous apparent sanity to the roots in universal human frailty of his own situation. His apparent obsession represents, in fact, the elimination of a mental poison, the purgation of unclean impulses from the spirit which cannot, while they are still present, receive the saving visitation of sleep. Exposing instincts which normally remain hidden under the 'simperings' of affected 'virtue' and the pretentious garb of current social behaviour, he reveals, beyond his own infirmity, and that of the society over which he formerly ruled, the true state of man by which Gloucester has been brought to blindness and himself to the condition in which we see him. If the contemplation of this state brings the speaker to the verge of moral disintegration, that is a necessary part of the complete pattern of the tragedy which must precede the coming restoration of harmony. The pressure of emotion at this point, besides twisting its expression into incoherent forms is such that even the sightless Gloucester feels himself to be in the presence of a 'ruin'd piece of nature' (the universal implications of Lear's condition could hardly be more explicitly stated) and anticipates that, under the pressure of such concentrated emotion, the 'great world' itself of which Lear is so consistently the microcosm, the miniature expression, will wear itself 'out to nought'.

Among the tragic effects of unleashed passion has been the blinding of Gloucester himself, which prompts Lear to follow his general denunciation by a reference to the victim's lost sight: 'I remember thine eyes well enough'. The spectacle prompts him to the enigmatic expression 'Do thy worst, blind Cupid' in which the symbol of the brothel (noted here by most commentators) at once refers to Gloucester's own past sin, from which Edmund was born, and leads to Lear's own passionate rejection of sexual love in 'I'll not love', a repudiation caused in him by its observed consequences through the play. The full meaning of the phrase, however, carries us further. The blindness of Gloucester, as we have already had occasion to observe, is compatible with a fresh insight into the way of the world, which a man may understand—as Lear now affirms—even with 'no eyes'. To illustrate this he returns once more to the theme

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of justice which has so persistently occupied him since his wits began to turn. His own experiences have taught him the relative value of the standards commonly accepted by society, and the world is now seen by him, much as the Fool saw it, as subject to a characteristic inversion, a process of 'handy-dandy' in which 'justice' and 'thief', 'creature' and 'cur' occupy the opposite to their normally accepted places. Disorder, the reversal of nature, makes felt its universal presence, in other words, through a vision itself deranged. In the ferocious denunciation of the 'rascal beadle' which follows, the tone of which is remarkably close to that of certain passages in *Timon of Athens*, the traditional attitude to lust and usury, vices seen as closely related, is expressed in terms of passionate resentment; the very exercise of authority is seen to be subject to the action of 'blood'-inspired passion. This is truly, in Edgar's phrase, 'reason and madness', at once the product of new understanding and the projection into lunatic form of an internal state of moral disorder which can have no place in the approaching reconciliation.

In the light of this new sense of the universal inversion of moral values—itself now seen, dramatically speaking, as the extension of his own state of internal conflict—Lear immediately returns to the personal plane. Addressing Gloucester, whom he now clearly recognizes, he brings his own mood at last into line with the attitude of resigned passivity which has been present as an undercurrent throughout this Act: 'Thou must be patient; we came crying hither'. It is at this stage, with Lear's mood assimilated, after the recognition of Gloucester, to the prevailing spirit, so that we are ready for the next stage in the development of the pattern, that Cordelia's attendants come upon him. As Lear, escaping from them, leaves the stage, the sublime and the pathetic, the sense of accepted royalty—'I am a king': 'You are a royal one, and we obey you'—and of mental unbalance produced by intolerable suffering—'I am cut to the brains'—are brought into revealing contact. The Gentleman's comment—

> Thou hast one daughter,
> Who redeems nature from the general curse
> Which twain have brought her to—

clearly prepares the way, by its introduction of the explicitly religious motive for the reconciliation which is immediately to follow. Cordelia's goodness, thus placed in the spiritual context of redemption, is the natural consequence of her state of 'grace'; by her very existence, and by the firmness of her stand upon the natural foundations of ordered living, she redeems 'nature', with which this play has from the first been so concerned, from the 'general curse' of sinfulness which we have by now so thoroughly explored.

This, the first open introduction of a new and central theme into the play's orchestration, is followed immediately by talk of a 'battle' which, we are led to imagine, will bring resolution not only to the external events of the tragedy, but to the conflict of good and

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evil which underlies them. From these first rumours to the final appearance, heralded by trumpets, of the avenging Edgar a new line of symbolic imagery will grow progressively in power. Meanwhile, the first effect of the contemplation of a suffering so much greater than his own, as corresponding to the kingly state of he who bears it, is, paradoxically, to make Gloucester more ready to bear his own misfortunes[6] and to accept the judgement of the 'ever-gentle gods'; the adjective, so unexpected in view of the tragedies we have just witnessed, is none the less characteristic of this moment in the play's development. Savagery and 'gentleness', in fact, are now coming to be seen as co-existent aspects of the subsistent reality after an understanding of which all the central characters of this play are, in various degrees, groping. The complete vision, aiming at the integration of both, must suppress the reality of neither; the very placing side by side of these very real opposites is an essential step in the attainment of the growing moral pattern which is the end of *King Lear*. To this new sense of spiritual inclusiveness corresponds also Edgar's affirmation that he is one who has been brought, 'by the art of known and feeling sorrows', to be 'pregnant to good pity'. The death of Oswald at his hands, after his callous affirmation of self-interest as a motive—

> That eyeless head of thine was first framed flesh
> To raise my fortunes—

seems itself to be indicative of the presence of new currents moving through the play and to anticipate a final resolution in terms of action which, so we are led to believe, is dimly announced by the distant sound of the 'beaten drum' with which the scene closes.

With Gloucester and Lear once more united in the contemplation of the tragic experience which has brought them together, and with both, as king and courtier, subdued to an acceptance of their dimly conceived destinies, the way is at last open for a restoration of natural harmony. The scene in which this takes place (IV, vii) is, from the point of view of Shakespeare's capacity to unite the dramatic and poetic elements with which he is working, the most advanced in the play. It is full of the 'symbolism' of the last period, a 'symbolism' which is not imposed upon the dramatic development but which springs from and completes it. Given the extraordinary freedom, the breadth of reference which everywhere characterize the verse of this play, it is only a step further to introduce effects that are not strictly part of the development of the drama, but which the unprecedented control of the poet succeeds in welding organically into the total effect. 'Sleep' we have already found to form part of a 'symbolic' effect of this kind; and Shakespeare now adds music, with its associations of harmony, and 'fresh garments', suggesting the purification accomplished in Lear

[6]Once more his reaction to Lear's tragedy has been anticipated by Edgar in his earlier couplets (III, vi).

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by the immersion of past sorrows into repose. Kent too is requested by Cordelia—prematurely, as he thinks—to 'put off' the clothes which are 'memories of these worser hours' and to clothe himself afresh for what she conceives as the approaching hour of providential resolution. The Doctor calls upon music at the moment of Lear's awakening, and Cordelia prays for his 'restoration' in language which relates the musical symbol of harmony to the revival of unity and health in the torn and divided personality:

> O, you kind gods,
> Cure this great *breach* in his abused nature;
> The *untuned* and *jarring* senses, O, wind up
> Of this child-changed father.

By such means, Lear's suffering is transformed, made into a condition of his revival. When his awakening takes place, it comes, characteristically, little by little, covering the bitter memories of the past by an incoming tide of fresh emotions. We can feel this most clearly of all in his first exclamation:

> Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
> Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
> Do scald like molten lead.

This at once looks back to past experience, to the 'burning shame' which, earlier in the Act, had 'stung him' and kept him from Cordelia, and indicates a fresh spiritual development. Lear's difficulty in believing that he really sees his daughter before him indicates both the depth and the remoteness of what he has passed through; the suggested idea of resurrection ('You do me wrong to take me out of the grave') contributes to the same effect. So, in a different way, does the sense of compassion which prompts him, in the moment of his awakening, to say—

> I should e'en die with pity
> To see another thus,

and which is an echo, like the combination of shattered pathos and fresh understanding which prompts his 'I am a foolish, fond old man', of the humanity he has learnt in his exposure to the tempest. Lear, in other words, still suffers on the 'wheel of fire' to which the consequences of his own passion and folly originally bound him, but his grief no longer springs from division, from the 'embossed carbuncle' in his own 'corrupted blood' which produced Regan and Goneril; it has become such that it can, for the first time, contemplate 'a soul in bliss'.

For the length of this scene, then, Shakespeare has succeeded in balancing the suffering of the first part of the play with an adequate harmony fulfilled in terms of external symbolism through Cordelia's prayer for 'benediction' and Lear's corresponding confession of guilt:

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I know you do not love me; for your sisters
Have, as I do remember, done me wrong:
You have some cause, they have not.

This is the central moment of reconciliation, full of significance for an understanding, not only of *King Lear*, but of the whole pattern of Shakespeare's last plays. The restoration of the original relationship of child to father is the resolution of the ruin originally caused by 'blood' in the unity of the family. Two features of this development are especially worthy of note. In the first place Lear, whilst still remembering his past experiences, looks back to them, as it were, across a great gap of intervening time, sees them as belonging to another world; in the second, his new state is explicitly described in terms of a spiritual rebirth. 'Thou art a soul in bliss': 'You are a spirit, I know': such phrases, added to the sense of a break in temporal continuity—

it is danger
To make him e'en go o'er the time he has lost—

have a double effect. They at once stress the spiritual meaning of Lear's new state by placing it outside the normal temporal process and show that it is not of this world, that in this world, indeed, it may even be cruelly interrupted. The achievement of a state which is that of 'souls in bliss' does not necessarily involve the end of exposure to suffering. If the spiritual life of Lear and his daughters is situated, from now onwards, on a level that is not that of the political action, the passions which move that action still have to work themselves out, and even annihilate the main protagonists in the last part of the tragedy. It is no accident that this scene of achieved reconciliation, towards which every incident and development since the end of the tempest has tended as its natural consummation, ends with a doubtful and sinister reference to the coming 'arbitrament' of battle with which Kent, as the loyal follower of accepted royalty, is mainly concerned

My point and period will be thoroughly wrought,
Or well or ill, as this day's battle's fought.

The political action has issues of its own, spiritually relevant, which are still undecided and which the remaining action of the play will be largely concerned to resolve; the resolution may well be, as proves the case, contrary to that which we have traced to its consummation in the sphere of personal relations.

The last Act, indeed, brings the two actions, the personal and the political, finally together. As the hour for battle approaches Edmund emerges increasingly as the dominating figure in the sphere of action. With the business of military command clearly in his hands, he feels strong enough to refer contemptuously to Albany as 'self-reproving' and 'full of alteration'; his own thought, within the limits imposed by his declared philosophy, is thoroughly consistent, fully resolved to find its appropriate translation in terms of

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action. With this assurance, he is able to look with detachment at the rivalry of the two sisters for his affections; when Regan entreats him not to be 'familiar' with Goneril he ironically takes up a pose of outraged virtue with his 'In honour'd love' and the exclamation 'She and the duke her husband!' In such utterances the self-reliant man who has made his way to power by brushing aside the bonds of 'nature' expresses the sense of his own mastery of the fields of action. For all his self-confidence, however, the forces which are shortly to combine to undo Edmund are already gathering for the final resolution. Chief among them, and in accordance with the 'philosophy' prevailing in the play, is the passion which he has roused in each of the two sisters, and which emerges in all its intensity in Regan's reference to the 'forfended place' and in Goneril's parallel admission:

> I had rather lose the battle than that sister
> Should loosen him and me.

The unprejudiced man of the world, not less than Lear in the early part of his tragedy, is playing with forces which he does not understand, but which bear within themselves the seeds of their own disintegration and will therefore destroy him. The capacity of irrational and predatory desire to exercise a decisive influence upon political events is something which Edmund, whose passion is entirely taken up in devotion to consistent self-interest, cannot conceive and therefore fails to allow for; so—from another point of view—is the deference to the claims of conscience which simultaneously begins to assert itself in Albany's references to 'the rigour of our state' and to the 'most just and heavy causes' which—so he fears—inspire Cordelia's party. Behind both these forces, which are on the point of slipping finally out of the control which Edmund still believes he can impose upon them, lies, as the instrument of final vengeance, the disguised Edgar, already associated with the 'trumpet sound' which is to announce the final 'arbitrament'. That Edmund himself still believes that he can play off one against the other the two sisters, 'each', in his detached, almost humorous phrase,

> jealous of the other, as the stung
> Are of the adder,

is, in the long run, part of the blindness which underlies his practical capacity; so also is his conviction that he can use the 'countenance' of Albany's authority for the battle before turning him over to the fate designed for him by Goneril:

> Let her who would be rid of him devise
> His speedy taking off.

He has still to learn that the forces he has helped to raise are greater than he can hope to control, and that they will, in the hour of apparent success, bring about his downfall.

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That downfall itself, however, represents no simple vindication of loyalty and good faith. It is, on the contrary, part of a larger and more obscure design than any conceived by the actors who share in it as partial and limited reflections. The final resolution towards which, in terms of action, the whole play seems to have been tending, makes this almost intolerably clear. The battle between the contending parties is disposed of in a few lines (V, ii) and, at the end of it, Edgar brings his father news that Lear has been defeated and his daughter made captive. Once more tragic events impose upon exhausted man the obligation to revise his moral categories, to meet the challenge of adverse circumstances with a corresponding renewal of response. To the weariness and pessimism summed up in Gloucester's comment 'A man may rot even here', Edgar replies with a more resilient attitude, born equally of exposure to adverse fortune, in his call for endurance and patience: 'Ripeness is all'. The phrase implies readiness to submit, although without understanding, to a possible over-ruling design. The pattern of events, so seemingly heartless and even superfluously cruel in its details, is in fact greater than any single experience can compass or judge; to realize this in a spirit of tough acquiescence as far beyond the understanding of the earlier Lear or Gloucester as it is beyond the comprehension of Edmund's jaunty self-reliance, is to lay the foundations for a possible spiritual attitude to life. Gloucester himself, taught by his own sufferings that even his own relapse into pessimism is petty, self-regarding, accepts the truth of this in his rejoinder: 'And that's so too'. With these, his last words in the play, he rounds off his subsidiary role in what is once more, from now on, essentially Lear's tragedy.

In the sphere of political action and worldly success, however, the course of events moves on in the final scene (V, iii) to a conclusion which seems to make no concession to the glimpses of newly-found intuition thus hardly won. If these have validity, it is on another and apparently unrelated level. The battle seems to have left Edmund in full and undisputed control of events. To his order that the aged King and his daughter should be removed to prison, Cordelia can only reply with her determination to 'outfrown false fortune's frown' and with the profound moral integrity implied in her quiet 'Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?' If her attitude denotes a characteristic mastery, it is on a moral rather than on a practical level. Lear's response, equally characteristic of his new, 'resurrected' state, is more pathetic, even in a sense more sentimental in kind. Life for him has been entirely concentrated, since his awakening and recovery, into the reconciliation with his daughter; and prison itself, whilst he is with her, is the whole of his universe. In this spirit he takes up once more the theme of paternal blessing and filial forgiveness which lies at the heart of the central symbolic situation:

> When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
> And ask of thee forgiveness,

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and looks back, as though across the infinite distance imposed by the experiences through which he has lately passed, at the 'gilded butterflies' and 'court news' which had once, in what seems a barely conceivable remoteness, meant so much to his headstrong nature. As Lear speaks at this point, he is at once broken by his experiences and beyond being affected by them. The speech moves from the gentle irony which enables the old man to compare himself and his daughter, in their coming imprisonment, to 'God's spies', to the assertion, at once intensely moving and charged with a disturbing defiance, that

> He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven
> And fire us hence like foxes.

The whole episode creates, as it were, an island of peace, precariously isolated in a world of iron. Lear has attained, at the expense of his own broken nature, a vision of spiritual acceptance, but across it, present if no longer uniquely so, lies the shadow of the way of the world.

The shadow, indeed, falls again with Edmund's characteristically metallic interruption 'Take them away', to which Lear's last utterance, just quoted, is a reaction. The prison, for all Lear's efforts to isolate himself, is still part of the world, and the way of the world is still as Edmund, and those like him understand it:

> . . . men
> Are as the time is: to be tender-hearted
> Does not become a sword.

which finds its confirmation in his captain's reply:

> I cannot draw a cart, nor eat dried oats.

Once more inhuman behaviour is related to hostile economic circumstances. To the last in this play such spiritual control over their baser passions as men achieve is won at the cost of almost intolerable strain; those, the vast majority, who are not prepared to exercise the endurance which must precede moral integration are the victims of those who, like Edmund, recognize as relevant only their own egoistic purposes. This, in turn, however, is far from the last word. Immediately after his instructions have been given, the sisters and Albany return to assume their place in the action, and it is soon clear that Edmund's own supposed control of the course of events is largely a delusion. One by one the very threads he had thought to manoeuvre in the interests of his own intrigue turn against him. His account of the dispositions he has taken against Lear and Cordelia win from Albany the rebuke that he, as 'fortune's soldier' rather than the servant of a cause to which the natural bonds of loyalty bind him, is 'but a subject of this war'; and this in turn prompts first Regan and then Goneril—with her passionate interruption 'Not so hot'—to reveal the true nature of her rivalry. The interchange of rebukes leads finally to Albany's contemptuous dis-

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missal of Edmund as 'half-blooded fellow', to Regan's admission that it is her desire that he should 'husband' her, and to the open expression of Goneril's rivalry. The process of dissolution which follows logically wherever 'nature' is reversed thus projects its consequences into action. It is at this point that the trumpet, so often anticipated in these later scenes, sounds three times its announcement of resolution, followed by the appearance, behind the trumpeter, of the disguised figure of Edgar in whom resolution is in fact reposed.

In Edgar's challenge, so worded as to stand out with a quality of romantic resonance that makes it less the voice of an individual than the expression of an instrument of destiny, the issue between Gloucester's two sons is seen, in fact to be more than personal, to imply a meeting between two opposed and mutually exclusive worlds. The contrast between them, however, absolute as it is, is of the kind that implies a subsistent relationship. Edgar's words recognize this implicitly when they give full weight to the virtues of the 'new man', if such we may call Edmund. He has, even in the eyes of his mortal enemy, 'strength, youth, place, and eminence', the power of his 'victor sword' and, above all, the 'fire-new fortune' which is in reality the child of his confident self-reliance. These things, however, attractive as they are in themselves, have become part of Edmund's character at a price: the price of that denial of the old order of tradition and its attendant virtues, which is—in Edgar's mind—the heart of his half-brother's crime and the expression of 'unnatural' evil. For Edmund is, in spite of all, a 'traitor'—

> False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father,
> Conspirant 'gainst this high illustrious prince,
> And from the extremest upward of thy head
> To the descent and dust below thy foot,
> A most toad-spotted traitor;

and the treason of which he thus stands accused is, in the outlook of this play, the supreme outrage. The self-confidence with which Edmund meets this challenge is equally part of his character. 'The law of arms' which would have approved his refusal to fight is no part of his nature, for which the traditional sanctions of custom have no validity. Preferring to trust to his own resources, he meets his half-brother—and the 'blood' relationship between them is, even at this point, no accident—hand-to-hand, exposes his whole fortune to a single trial, and falls.

His fall is the occasion of the final resolution in the camp of Lear's enemies. Goneril, faced with her husband's denunciation, acts as Iago had acted before her, and leaves the stage for the last time refusing to give account for her actions. A few minutes later we learn that she has put an end to her own life, but not before she has poisoned Regan in the effort to achieve her desires. The dying Edmund, ironic and detached almost to the last, passes on their passion, and on his own reaction to it, his fitting comment:

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I was contracted to them both: all three
Now marry in an instant.

In the moment of death, however, and faced by the revelation of his brother's identity, he too in his own way admits, as never before, subjection to the prevailing pattern. To Edgar's affirmation that the gods are 'just' and that Gloucester's punishment, in which Edmund himself has been so instrumental, has been the consequence of his original reversal of 'natural' ties, he replies with a gesture of acquiescence:

The wheel is come full circle: I am here.

In this admission, the political and the personal processes, which seem so far to have developed on parallel lines, are at last brought together. 'The dark and vicious place' in which Edmund was 'unnaturally' begot brought the father in due course to blindness and his bastard son, in the very moment that should have been that of his triumph, to his fall. The action of the 'wheel' of fortune, genuinely if mysteriously impelled by the 'gods', covers the whole of human life and to it the successful adventurer is not less subject than the betrayed and erring father. Relief from the sense of enslavement to circumstance which this recognition seems to imply must be preceded by due acceptance of this subjection to a universal process.

Edgar, whose next speech lifts the action to a different plane, suggests that such relief implies, as a preliminary condition, the acceptance of death. By so doing, he gives full expression to a theme that has been insistently present, as an unobtrusive but pervasive background, in the preceding action. Gloucester has been haunted since his blindness by the temptation to commit suicide, Cordelia has been murdered, and Lear himself has, since his recovery, been living what can fairly be called a posthumous existence on the verge of final extinction; death, in its manifold forms, is now universally present and represents, by its presence, a supreme test against which the prevailing spirit of tragic conformity must be measured. It is death, indeed, as well as glimpses of reconciliation that the protagonists have found at the end of their common pilgrimage to Dover; and it is, therefore, death that now calls for assimilation, as a final pervading element in the poetic pattern. This, even more than the expression of one more intense personal drama, is the true meaning of Edgar's superb account of his father's end. Speaking as Gloucester's true-born son on the very limit of human emotion, he finds in the very unwillingness to die which the characters of this play all, with such apparent lack of logic, show—

. . . we the pain of death would hourly die
Rather than die at once!—

a confirmation of 'our lives' sweetness' that is not, in the last analysis and in the face of all appearances, pessimistic. In the light of this position our emotional responses to the tragedy in

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which father and son are alike involved is, by a process of almost imperceptible delicacy, transformed. Gloucester's 'bleeding rings', the visible sign of his suffering, become a setting for the 'precious stones of sight'; the 'madman' in his rags is transformed into the son who 'became his guide',

> Led him, begg'd for him, *saved him from despair*;

and finally, when Gloucester at last learns the true details of his son's 'pilgrimage', his heart, 'flawed' indeed by the emotional pressure to which he has been so long and so intensely exposed, 'bursts', thus paying tribute to its incapacity to support the emotional 'conflict' to which it has been subjected, but—

> 'Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,
> Burst *smilingly*.

It is perhaps worth noting that this union of conflicting emotions has its parallel in the 'smiles and tears' which met in harmonious strife in the overflowing emotions of Cordelia (IV, iii). The similarity of spirit indicates the presence, in these later scenes, of an expanding emotional pattern. Gloucester's exit from the play in which his function has been throughout one of commentary and parallel is not, as seen through the eyes of Edgar, ultimately despairing.

It does, however, initiate a tragic conclusion in which full and uncompromising stress is laid upon a growing tide of death and dissolution. The reaction of his hearers to Edgar's account is, in this respect, significant. No sooner has he ceased to speak than Albany, whose function in the play is now simultaneously that of compassionate spectator and just guarantor of a minimum of subsistent order, announces that he is

> almost ready to dissolve
> Hearing of this;

and his comment is immediately followed in turn by Edgar's report of Lear's further griefs, sorrows which are related as described by Kent and which end by bringing the teller himself to the verge of mortal endurance:

> which in recounting
> His grief grew puissant, and the strings of life
> Began to crack.

The whole of this final episode is thus set under the sign of dissolution, which is indeed the only possible outcome of sufferings so intolerably heavy and so protractedly borne. To conclude it, Lear enters for the last time 'with Cordelia dead in his arms' and in a world dominated by a double sense of darkness and emotional petrefaction, which finds its persistent echo in the words of the victims ('O, ye are men of stone': 'Fall and cease': 'All's cheerless, dark, and deadly'), the curtain finally falls. Apart from the inherent

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dramatic power of the situation, which calls for no comment, this final episode serves to round off the emotional unity of the whole tragedy. Lear, finally reconciled to his daughter in adversity, himself dies with his body in her arms, gaining in death the only relief conceivable in temporal terms from 'the rack of this tough world', the course of which has proved so consistently indifferent to the spiritual intuitions which suffering itself has brought painfully to birth. Kent, loyal to the end, anticipates in his own last words the 'journey' in which he is shortly to follow his master, and Edgar is left by Albany with the mission of sustaining 'the gored state' in a spirit in which exhaustion and sincerity, purged of all excessive pretensions by the contemplation of the sufferings just witnessed, join hands in a gesture of mutual sustainment.

D. A. TRAVERSI.

[*Concluded.*]

BOOKS PUBLISHED

The following books, large parts of the substance of which had appeared in *Scrutiny*, have come out during the past twelve months:

THE COMPLEX FATE, by Marius Bewley, with an Introduction and a Disagreement by F. R. Leavis (Chatto and Windus, 16/-).

FREEDOM AND ANTHOLOGY IN EDUCATION, by G. H. Bantock (Faber and Faber, 18/-).

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COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

THE CULT OF BENJAMIN BRITTEN

BENJAMIN BRITTEN. A commentary on his works from a group of specialists. Edited by Donald Mitchell and Hans Keller (Rockliff, 30/-).

I suppose that no one seriously interested in contemporary music, whatever qualifications he might feel disposed to urge regarding certain particular works, would deny to Benjamin Britten a distinguished status among living British composers. He speaks with an individual voice, the index of a genuine and idiosyncratic musical personality, and although influential predecessors may be identified with sufficient ease, he is in no obvious sense parasitic upon them. Without doubt he has already made a significant and distinctive contribution to the music of our age, and the fact that he should in his fortieth year be honoured with an impressively bulky and lavishly produced symposium of articles, usually the privilege of the dead or of the venerably established living, is testimony to the wide esteem in which he is held and the force of the appeal that within so brief a space of time he has been able to exercize. Many of his most sincere admirers, however, have on various occasions been constrained to express some feeling of uncertainty about the ultimate value of a good deal of his work, some sense of disappointment at seemingly inexplicable lapses and inequalities, some suspicion of being in a manner cheated, as though the composer had not troubled to bring the ' real thing ' sharply into focus but had rested content with an approximate outline to tantalize and exasperate. This being the case, it is most surprising to find a uniform tone of eulogy prevailing throughout the present volume, eulogy sometimes hysterical and almost always dogmatic. The list of contributors includes some eminent musical personalities, but as one looks in vain for the names of musicians who would, one knows, while doing Britten whole-hearted justice, have presented a more balanced view of his place and achievement, it is hard to resist a notion that they have not been invited to contribute because of a concern on the editors' part to preserve intact and unclouded the picture of their idol's near-perfection.[1] Stricture nowhere involves anything more than a tactful suggestion that perhaps one or two of Britten's works do not quite reach the level of the others, the total

[1]Donald Mitchell contemptuously dismisses an admirable and damaging piece of criticism by Mosco Carner, quoted from a notice of *Billy Budd*, as inspired simply by 'suspicion' of Britten's technical facility.

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impression resulting from the volume being that he is a heavenly-endowed genius who can do little or no wrong. Hans Keller, in a lengthy and extravagant comparison of Britten and Mozart—a business of drawing obvious and superficial parallels proving or suggesting nothing—concludes that ' as one who is soaked in the music both of Mozart and Britten I may be allowed to claim that for the first time Mozart, the universal musician who masters everything with a somnambulistic surefootedness and grace, has found a companion'. If the other contributors stop short of that kind of pronouncement, the monotonously laudatory attitude of them all necessarily limits seriously the value of the symposium as a piece of musical criticism.

It is possible, of course, that the editors would deny that 'criticism' was their aim, and would affirm that their objective was exposition and description intended for those who are no more than barely acquainted with Britten's work, rather than evaluation and discussion for those who already know it reasonably well. This view, indeed, would seem to be supported by the dust-jacket note: 'This book is written to help the understanding of the millions who admire Britten superficially. This help can only be given through scholarship, taste, and with that special tact needed in dealing with actual and potential friends'. But if the volume really is directed at the half-converted, it is surely nonsense to suppose that those 'millions' whose 'understanding' needs to be quickened will be able, aided by no more than fragmentary comment, to cope with the many musical quotations in Mr. Mitchell's essay, for instance, or will be capable of following with profit Paul Hamburger's involved account of the chamber music.[2] The book takes for granted more equipment than the mere layman can be expected to possess, yet those who are qualified to use it, and are interested in contemporary music at all, are not likely to be in need of what amounts simply to a grandiose piece of propaganda.

There are, however, other and more serious charges to be made against the book, for whatever audience it was in fact designed. The most obviously objectionable feature of the volume is its 'slickness', the tone of bright-and-breezy efficiency characterizing the contributions of the two editors and their handling of the whole enterprise. This is apparent in the adolescent 'perkiness' of a number of their footnotes, and in the ponderous witticisms of the preface:—

> 'The help of all who have assisted us is acknowledged on pages vi and vii. It remains for us to thank ourselves for not giving up half way through, but only shortly before publication day, when we realized that the book had to be given up if it was ever to be published.

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[2]And can one imagine many of them obeying an editorial injunction to consult Schoenberg's *'Ode to Napoleon, A Survivor from Warsaw* and, last, the unfinished and as yet unpublished (!) Psalm "O du mein Gott: alle Völker preisen Dich und versichern Dich ihrer Ergebenheit", op. 50c; for reciter, mixed chorus and orchestra'?

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'Any instance of the contributors' opinions coinciding with the Editors' is purely coincidental'.

After that one is not surprised to come across such a specimen of banality as this, picked at random from Mr. Keller's essay on *Peter Grimes* ('The story; the music not excluded'.): 'Others too, he (Grimes) can (sometimes) love as intensely as he can despise them, but he cannot show, let alone prove his tenderness as easily as his wrath—except through the music which, alas, the people on the stage don't hear'. Associated with that kind of thing is an insufferable facetious-erudite pretentiousness and pseudo-profundity, of which plentiful specimens may be found in Keller's summing-up essay, 'The Musical Character': 'The Spanish philosopher of culture, Ortega y Gasset, for example, observes that antique man, before he does something, makes a step back like the toreador about to deliver his death-blow. He slips into the past as into a diving-bell before he plunges into a present problem. True, but not only for antique man. True also for Britten and Mozart. Others, too, have slipped into the diving-bell. But they never proceeded to dive'. As though afraid that the reader may not have been sufficiently impressed by that display, Mr. Keller adds a footnote to the effect that 'The "true-not-only-for", *i.e.*, the extra-historical meaning of history, is really the basic thought of Spengler's *Decline of the West*'. This consorts oddly with the information on the dust-jacket that one of Mr. Keller's aims has been 'to develop music criticism (which he considers to be in a pre-natal state) into a conscientiously and purely *musical* discipline'.

Mr. Mitchell, though not so aggressively pretentious as his colleague—he does not apparently count among his prime aims 'the creation of *scientific* musicology by applying himself to the psychology (psychoanalysis) of music' (dust-jacket)—is frequently guilty of a similar kind of hollow corrugation, and is liable to similar lapses of tone. He does, to be sure, from time to time isolate in an interesting way some of Britten's stylistic idiosyncracies, though his approach tends to be external and his commentary never goes far enough to be illuminating. One does not feel that it is sufficient for the critic to offer a musical quotation with no more than the remark that it is 'Perhaps Britten's most subtle employment of dotted rhythm'. Music criticism, though one need not agree with Mr. Keller that it is 'in a pre-natal state', is acknowledged to be at best a delicate business, calling for the utmost tact and the sharpest sense of relevance; but Mr. Mitchell's technique of quotation and assertion, supported in most cases by only the most rudimentary analytic comment, would seem to be an evasion of the difficulty by undue simplification, worthy though the aim for objectivity may be. The critic, if he is to say anything about the effect, the impact of a composition upon the listener, must to a certain extent venture upon the subjective, rooted though all such considerations must be in the musical fact. The composer, of course, is notoriously more open to falsification and disfigurement from this source than the writer; when

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the critic passes from the *musical* fact to the *verbal* generalization about the 'effect', he cannot, if he is a conscientious critic and not a mere amateur of sensations, do more than endeavour to hint and suggest, in the hope that he has been lucid and discriminating enough to secure some measure of comprehension and assent from his readers. That he runs a perpetual risk, and must be unceasingly vigilant, are facts which do not, it seems to me, reduce the critic to the stark unhelpfulness of Mr. Mitchell; recognition of the dangers of the undertaking need not imply that there is no mean between his austerity and, say, J. N. W. Sullivan's *Beethoven,* to choose a fair example of subjective irresponsibility. But austerity is unhappily not a constant feature of Mr. Mitchell's criticism. Away from the concrete musical example, immersed in anxious juggling with 'influences' and 'traditions', he falls repeatedly into aridity and jargon: 'I have no wish to recapitulate what has already been written about Britten's relation to Mahler, but it is of prime importance to understand *the extra-chronological relationship of Mahler to Strawinsky in so far as they stand in relation to a common unifying factor—Britten,* even if it is the attraction and common features of opposites'. Such writing is unfortunately all too characteristic of what may be called the New Criticism of music; Mr. Mitchell shares with many modern critics an irritating tendency, doubtless more or less traceable to a wrong-headed reading of Mr. Eliot, to assume that the fitting of a composer into some 'tradition' or other, and the assimilation of as many different musical figures as possible into that 'tradition', is in itself a very triumph of insight and critical subtlety.

Of the great bulk of the articles the majority, being merely expository and descriptive, with little or no critical 'point', are not sufficiently challenging to awaken much discussion of any kind. Many of them read like fairly conventional programme notes, strung together in the hope that the result will look like a properly organized essay. This, at any rate, is the impression I receive from Boyd Neel's account of the music for string orchestra—particularly regrettable in the superficial commentary on one of Britten's best early works, the *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge*—Joan Chissell's article on the Concertos, and William Mann's section on the Incidental Music, to take a few examples. The uncritical adulation taken for granted—it is dismal to find so distinguished an authority as Hans Redlich wallowing in superlatives like 'stupendous feat', 'unsurpassed mastery', 'inexhaustible resourcefulness', taxing the patience and thereby obscuring some worthwhile material—there is useful information and occasional critical insight to be found here and there in the volume, notably in Lennox Berkeley's article on the Light Music, Norman Del Mar's descriptive analyses of the chamber operas, Arthur Oldham's essay on the music of *Grimes,* and George Malcolm's two decent and unpretentious pieces on Britten's Purcell realizations.

But there are two articles, as yet unmentioned, that demand particular and separate attention, involving as they do considerations very pertinently bearing upon the question of the oddly mixed

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effect Britten's work, as we have noted, has upon many who recognize and sincerely admire his gifts. In the Earl of Harewood's biographical note and character sketch, 'The Man', we find the following information: 'Auden's strong influence on his own generation extended to Britten, and he was to play a considerable part in the composer's life during the seven years which followed their first collaboration in 1935. Between 1935 and 1939, Britten worked with Auden on the films *Coal Face* and *Night Mail;* he wrote incidental music to *The Ascent of Fó* and *On the Frontier;* they collaborated on radio features; and Auden provided the lyrics for *Our Hunting Fathers, On This Island* and (with Swingler) the *Ballad of Heroes*. The last-named was written for a special Festival of Music for the People; dedicated to the men of the British Battalion of the International Brigade who fell in Spain, it provides a clue, if not to Britten's musical personality at the time, at least to his political sympathies'. Alongside that may be set this extract from Mr. Peter Pears' article, 'The vocal music': 'In any case, *Our Hunting Fathers* was all part of a brilliant twenty-two-year-old's revolt against the stuffy and the sloppy. . . . Of all these difficult songs, the last one is perhaps the most difficult. It needs first-class playing from every solo instrument, from xylophone and trombone to horn and violin. The words are scratchy and definitely un-*bel-canto*. But the composer is a match for them'. The key-word there is 'difficult'; for the extreme executive difficulty of this work—Mr. Pears, while stressing this feature, does not trouble to seek a justification for it—exactly parallels the functionless obscurity of Auden's verse, particularly that of the song in question, 'Our hunting fathers told the story'. To return to the Earl of Harewood: 'A few weeks after the *première* of the *Ballad of Heroes*, Britten left England for the United States, influenced in his decision both by Auden's departure for America and by depression at the prevalent handling of the rapidly darkening political situation in Europe'. Apparently oblivious of the irony of the Left-wing composer's flight across the Atlantic almost immediately after the first performance of a work designed for a Festival of Music for the People, the writer is at some pains to justify Britten's American visit, observing that 'there was a feeling amongst Britten's friends that he was restricted in England'—what young artist has not, at some time, felt 'restricted' in his own country?—and that 'As it turned out, probably nothing could have been better for his career than his stay in America', since, amongst other reasons, 'Negatively, it threw him back on Europe and particularly England'. He was, at all events, a highly comfortable sojourner in the United States, living for part of the time 'in an artistic colony in Brooklyn, which was headed by W. H. Auden', where the thus uninterrupted collaboration meant that Auden was able to exercise a 'beneficial influence . . . on Britten's natural liking and understanding for poetry'. The tracing of resemblances between writers and musicians or, for that matter, between the practitioners of any two distinct arts, is a dangerous and generally profitless undertaking, but the Auden-Britten parallel perhaps belongs more properly to the field

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of social and cultural history than to that of criticism as such. 'Fellow-travellers' in the 'thirties, alike deploying their technical 'brilliance' in 'revolt against the stuffy and the sloppy', which might mean almost anything, and in the championship of the People, they both underwent an opportune reaction, and became the respectable and accepted figures they are to-day.[3]

Britten, then, grew up as a composer in the atmosphere of the clique and the côterie, the milieu of Public School Leftism in the 'thirties, and in the 'forties the 'artistic colony' of the Auden who chose to renounce Marx and eventually to cultivate Christianity and Juliana of Norwich. It is not necessary here to recall the fortunes of the Oxford Left-wing poets, to show how their ethos effectively prevented the emergence of artistic responsibility in the case of Auden, leaving him, after his 'defection', capable of nothing but increasingly feeble imitations of his own early work and a sterile flirtation with a fashionably mystical Christianity; but it is interesting to note how far short of a mature attitude Mr. Pears, himself once a member of the Brooklyn 'colony', shows himself to be in his remarks on the original reception accorded to *Our Hunting Fathers*: '*Our Hunting Fathers* is uncomfortable music. The English do not like brilliance, particularly in the young; satire disturbs them; so does parody, unless it is nice and gentle; obscurity bothers, unless the day-dream is induced. The vaguely pretentious and the jolly good fun are what we prefer, and *Our Hunting Fathers* is neither'. Such silly smartness, cheap narrowness, and adolescent small-mindedness on the part of an adult and an artist of Mr. Pears' calibre—that the 'brilliance', 'satire', and 'obscurity' of the work may be unacceptable to any sensitive listener, English or otherwise, and that it might be described as, to use a word of Mr. Pears' own, 'spikily' pretentious, are pertinent considerations—constitute an illuminating comment on the ethos, an ethos apparently past the stage of irresponsible enthusiasm, in which he was nurtured.

The Auden-Britten parallel, however, is not to be indefinitely extended. If the poetry of the later Auden has been a tale of mounting weariness and boredom, it is to the Britten of the 'forties, on the other hand, that we must turn if we are to view the composer at his most substantial and characteristic. Unlike Auden, he has proved himself capable of genuine rather than apparent development from the squibs of his youth to a coherent style, individual yet responsible. Even the *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge*, which might be said to occupy in his development a position analogous to that of *Paid on Both Sides* in Auden's, is already, in its own medium, a better, more sound and professionally accomplished

[3]Though the Earl of Harewood would have us understand that, for Britten, the 'reaction' actually involved no radical change of views: 'The various compositions which reflected a left wing ideology at about the time of the Spanish Civil War were straws in a wind which has not changed its direction, however much it may have come to blow with an increased economy and discrimination'.

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work, than its literary counterpart. Its technical assurance, real linear vitality and regulated exuberance, compensate for that element of parodistic jocularity—it has always seemed to me to reside more in the titles of some of the variations than in the effect of the music itself—which leads Mr. Mitchell to remark—not, of course, adversely—that 'The *Variations*' predominantly satirical mood, quite apart from their skilful parodying, reflects their period as accurately as the joint dramatic productions of Auden and Isherwood'. But it will be agreed that it is his writing for the voice, in various forms and combinations, that constitutes Britten's chief claim to distinction, and it is obvious that his achievement in this field has been solid and specific. He has evolved a type of melodic declamation which, while its ancestry in Purcell, Monteverdi, and Mahler is plain enough, is very much his own, and at best remarkably sensitive and expressive. With it goes a fine sense of rhythm which permits neither mechanical metricality, save where it is specially required, nor lyrical over-expansiveness and lack of control. To describe Britten's characteristic vocal writing as highly personal amounts to affirming that it could not very well be mistaken for that of any other composer. Yet it is in this very field, up to a point cultivated with such striking success, that one's doubts and dissatisfactions begin to arise. He has frequently been praised for his ability to set 'unpromising' texts; the uncompromisingly 'prosaic', it is said, as in *Saint Nicholas*, or the complexities of apparently unsuitably 'concentrated' poetry, as in the *Holy Sonnets of John Donne*, lose their recalcitrance in his hands, seeming naturally to assume their musical embodiment. Now to a certain extent this is true; 'At the round earth's imagined corners', for instance, which one might dismiss as hopelessly impracticable, gives rise to a buoyant vocal line, soaring without strain over cascading arpeggios; there is no suggestion of the composer doing violence to his musical sense in order to conquer, at all costs, an awkward text. It is not, one knows, necessary that a composer should tie himself slavishly to the poem, even if it is a great one; there are cases of the great poem being, in a sense, quite destroyed by the composer, yet occasioning a work of such quality that the listener forgets altogether the damage done to the text, the musical work and the poem upon which it is ostensibly based remaining distinct and independently valuable experiences. Britten neither 'destroys' Donnes's text, however, in the creation of a separate and satisfactory musical entity, nor in any way succeeds in providing a convincing musical equivalent of its intensity. Mr. Pears, discussing Britten's manner of setting poems, observes that 'words must bow before the music. It is not each individual phrase which calls upon the notes to obey it; the poem suggests a certain overall musical shape and thereafter the words must obey the music. It is the method of the great classical English song-writers, Dowland, Purcell, Arne, Handel'. None of those composers, on the other hand, ever took for their settings poems of the nature of Donne's Holy Sonnets. The listener who knows and values his Donne, cannot help measuring the music against the poetry and recognizing its

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hopeless inferiority. Lacking fire, variety, and sufficient *interest*, the setting, momentarily arresting and 'musical' though it be, suggests that the composer has seen no more than the externals of the poem. Despite Auden's 'beneficial influence', Britten seems curiously innocent where poetry is concerned; that he should have selected Rimbaud and Michelangelo so early in his career is less to his credit than many have assumed.

There is, in fact, a depressing sameness and monotony about too much of Britten's vocal music. Whole passages from *Saint Nicholas* could, one feels, be interchanged with fragments from *The Rape of Lucretia* or *Billy Budd* without anyone being the wiser. There are the same widely-leaping intervals, the same melismas; it becomes embarrassingly easy to predict the turn that the line will take at the next phrase. The exasperating thing is that the music so often hovers on the verge of the genuinely effective, as though a little more thought, a little extra critical stock-taking, would have rectified matters and resulted in a completely satisfying work of art. To criticize the composer solely on the score of his creative fluency would be, as Mr. Mitchell points out, narrow and absurd; but it is impossible not to suspect a correlation between his ease and rapidity of composition and the disappointing, only half-satisfactory impression many of his works make upon even the most well-disposed listener. His music, unlike that of some notoriously rapid composers, does not always make one feel that a mature, critically sifting intelligence has been at work before the setting of pen to paper. One feels, in fact, that there is an odd and radical immaturity in this music, for all its technical assurance and air of authority, as though the seriousness and responsibility of the later Britten were, in a way, the externals of an apparent maturity not fully achieved in actuality; as though the climate and environment in which the composer has developed, while certainly not leading to atrophy, as in the case of Auden, have proved after all to be a disadvantage of a more subtle nature.

This is not the place to embark on an exhaustive discussion of Britten's works, and the foregoing remarks, naturally, are not offered as applicable to all his music. That there is substantial achievement, *Peter Grimes* is there to prove.[4] I am aware that Britten's official admirers are by no means agreed as to the supremacy of *Grimes*; they tend rather to point to the anti-sonorous use of a large orchestra in the *Spring Symphony* and *Billy Budd*, derived from the experience of using limited resources in the chamber operas, as representing a tremendous advance on the relatively 'conventional' instrumentation of the earlier opera. Yet this much-vaunted lucidity of texture, this deliberate thinness, does not strike me as being, in Britten's case, altogether a positive gain. Sonority

[4]So long, I should add, as the librettist's distortion and sentimentalization of poor Crabbe is discounted. Too many persons' impressions of a great and under-estimated poet have been acquired at Sadler's Wells and Covent Garden.

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and clarity, after all, are not necessarily mutually exclusive qualities, as the later Debussy, Roussel, and the orchestration of *Grimes* itself sufficiently demonstrate. The masterly handling of the orchestra in the Interludes of *Grimes*, for example, its sensuous beauty not incompatible with sharpness of definition, is the perfect outcome of the opera's essentially romantic yet disciplined inspiration. By contrast, the 'sectional' use of huge resources in the *Spring Symphony*, so praised by Erwin Stein in his article on the Symphonies, does not seem to me to be without affectation. It may, at any rate, be one reason why this grandiose yet brittle production should look so tame beside Rawsthorne's compact and powerful *Symphony*, or his *Symphonic Studies*. The powerful element of nostalgia in *Grimes*, the sense of personal engagement, the almost self-indulgent enthusiasm of the writing, are the conditions of its circumscribed but very real success. By comparison the later works manifest a certain drabness, a kind of second-handness, as though the composer were aiming at—and attaining the partial end too easily—a wilful 'classicism' really foreign to his gifts and inclinations. But that such a view is by no means generally accepted the present volume is here to show. If one feels a sense of disappointment with each new work, one can be sure that the Mitchell-Keller fraternity, not to mention their willing comrades—almost another 'colony'—will find a reason for acclaiming it as one more manifestation of miraculous Genius.

ROBIN MAYHEAD.

A NEW JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

BRITISH JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES, Vol. 1, No. 1 (November, 1952). (Faber & Faber, 10/- per copy, 16/8 per year).

The Times Educational Supplement—not usually the most astringent of organs—has adequately characterized this new journal as having 'neither the rigour of a learned journal nor the appeal of a non-academic magazine'. It is perhaps a pity that the 'appeal' and 'rigour' should be thus opposed; otherwise one can only wholeheartedly concur with the implied condemnation. That such an array of educational dignitaries as constitutes the Standing Conference sponsoring the *Journal* should produce this collocation of dulness and verbosity is perhaps a not unfitting comment on the present state of the educational world.

The aims of the new *Journal* are set out as follows:

> 'to explain the significance of new thought, to provide philosophical discussion at a high level, and to deepen existing interest in the purposes and problems of current educational policy'.

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These, the necessary abstractness inescapable in all declarations of purpose allowed for, seem unexceptionable aims; and the admonition 'to provide philosophical discussion at a high level' could, rightly handled, supply a very serious need in the current state of thinking about educational problems. There has, of late years, been a lamentable lack of interest in the 'philosophic' problems raised by current exposition of educational practice; and, for instance, the activity-formalist battle has for too long existed in a fog of unexamined terminology and unappreciated assumption. It is indeed one's awareness of the pressing nature of the need and one's stimulated hope that at last some serious attempt was to be made to discuss contemporary policies, to examine existing assumptions with that measure of disinterestedness which such a journal could conceivably provide, that increase one's exasperated realisation that this unhappy production, as it manifests itself concretely in the first number, seems unlikely to fulfil its professed function of stimulating interest in present-day policies or of bringing to bear a critical scrutiny on current confusions.

Lest these seem harsh words, let us examine the contents in more detail. The main contribution, 'Education and the Map of Knowledge', comes from Professor Louis Arnaud Reid who holds, I think I am correct in saying, the only chair of the Philosophy of Education in the country. In terminology which is deplorably loose, Professor Reid considers various modes of knowing; and one's sympathies with Professor Reid's attempt to turn the logical positivist's case and to reassert other modes of knowing than that susceptible to certain limited criteria of verification is tempered by one's appreciation of the inadequacy of his descriptions; no modern philosopher is likely to be much impressed by statements of this sort:

> 'I will not here enter into the large and difficult question of whether—or how—constructive philosophy is "verifiable". Obviously its general statements are not verifiable in the scientific sense. But I should hold it arbitrary and unjustifiable to affirm that they are therefore subjective and that there are no criteria—no doubt very difficult to apply—which enable us to distinguish between more or less adequate philosophies'. (p. 14.)

(The essay contains a number of such phrases as 'roughly speaking' without being too dogmatic about it'—phrases which for Professor Reid blanket the necessity of stating clearly what he means.) What Professor Reid has to say about the writing of poetry will perhaps best illustrate, for readers of a literary journal, the inadequacy of his conceptions and the looseness of his phraseology:

> 'But let us turn to verbal language, beginning with the language which is nearest to actual experience and nearest to being, the "warm" language which is primarily the language of poetry, and sometimes of religious poetry. There is a sense in which the language of some poetry is trying to *be* the events it

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sings of—though it never succeeds, and it is strictly speaking aiming at much more. But there is a kind of poetry which is incantation, a calling up, a charming through words, which is evocative and invocative. Some poetry of love and nature is, as it were, the very articulation in words of love and nature; it is love and nature in so far as that is what is being articulated. Yet also, in so far as it is articulated, there is selection, emphasis, interpretation, and through the making, a discovery of something new. Here is not experience simply, but experience bodying forth in the shapes of words, and illuminated by images and thoughts drawn from other sources, made relevant through imagination. Sometimes this process of bringing us near to the original experience, but reliving it at a new level, is attained by the process of well chosen description or selective imitation. The poet, we say, is attempting to convey what he has seen and experienced. He does it by describing, but in such sensitive language that it is not bare events that we get, but his experience of events, and created into something new by the union of experience and words'.

(pp. 9-10.)

One might have thought that Professor Reid would have caught up with, say, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', thirty-five years after publication. If he considered the implications of that essay, he might not then describe so glibly the poetic function as 'a process of bringing us near to the original experience, but re-living it at a new level'. Any further analysis seems unnecessary in these pages.

And what, I wonder, would a great modern psychologist like D. H. Lawrence have to say about this:

'It is when we are in some measure stirred by other people, in attraction or repulsion, sympathy or antipathy, love or hate, that we may in any true sense be said to begin to know them in experience. (I am not here concerned wtih the difficult and technical question, in what sense we may be said to 'know' other minds.) Without being too dogmatic about it, it may be suggested that the positive poles of these pairs are more conducive to the knowledge of others that the negative poles, where one's own states (say of repulsion or hate) may get in the way. To feel antipathy to someone, to hate someone, is to be aware of both oneself and the other person at one and the same time. But the emphasis here is rather upon one's own feelings than upon the states of the other person. For instance, if one is vindictive or spiteful or desiring revenge, the experience is of oneself violently impacting to the detriment of the other, rather than of being aware of his feelings or his point of view. His point of view is only interesting to us in so far as we can hurt him, and enjoy doing it. So, although resistance and opposition to another personality is undoubtedly a kind of awareness of his being as well as of our own, it is an ego-centred and biased rather than an objective knowledge that we have'. (p. 7.)

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It is just to the profoundly ego-centred quality of so much modern love 'idealization' that Lawrence drew attention. But here it is not only to the superficiality of Professor Reid's diagnosis that I am pointing—superficiality for which there seems little possible excuse; it is also because what he says is so symptomatic of current demands for 'toleration' (usually another word for indifference), 'co-operation' (irrespective of the value of the enterprise in which one is expected to co-operate) and an indiscriminate and nerveless 'sympathy'. In the education world, if anywhere, L. H. Myers would have found justification for his animadversions against those who believe that 'the gift of moral and spiritual discrimination is universal and belongs in more or less equal measure to all men'. Nowhere would Lawrence have found more of what he calls 'the disease of niceness and benevolence and feeling good on our own behalf and good on somebody else's behalf'. But then, Lawrence knew what is implied by true 'responsibility'—'I hate this slime of all the world's my friend, my half-friend, anyway I'm not going to make an enemy of him'. Professor Reid concludes with some commonplace remarks about how the 'size' of knowledge will affect what we do in education, remarks too generalized to be of use. He avoids making any distinctions of value as between various modes of experience, distinctions so vitally necessary for us in our every-day educational practice; and, indeed, his article, in its lack of clarity, its careful avoidance of making any challengeable judgments which might have raised the tempo of educational discussion, its lack of concreteness, the looseness of its terminology, the underlying unction of many of its remarks, is a suitable product of a state of affairs which it at once typifies and helps to create.

Mr. Kelly's article on the 'Origin of Mechanics' Institutes' is dull and, to me, unrewarding. But I suppose it could be argued that such a mainly factual account might at some time prove a useful source of information for anyone seeking to write an important chapter in our cultural history, an account of adult education, and that a place should be found for such information in a learned journal. At any rate, the article is innocuous.

Dr. M. M. Lewis writes on 'Communication and Education'. He has discovered that large numbers of people are engaged on 'problems of communication'. He distinguishes technologists (*e.g.* radio mechanics), those who minister to aesthetic needs (*e.g.* writers) and those preoccupied with the 'nature and effects of language' (*e.g.* semanticists). In some sort of way all these workers are to co-ordinate and bring their work into relationship with that of educators whose 'chief instrument is communication' (undefined)—or at least 'another body of workers' is to survey what is being done and point out the relevant aspects for teachers. How Dr. Lewis expects to 'co-ordinate' work in such various fields or why teachers who are interested in the various fields cannot find out what they want for themselves he does not explain. One suspects that the launching of yet another dreary body of educational researchers is being prepared. His use of the word 'communication' towards the

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end of his article would provide a semanticist's field-day. And, indeed, so unclear is his terminology that I find it difficult to understand what the last page is supposed to mean. The general quality of Dr. Lewis' analysis can be aptly illustrated by a couple of quotations:

> 'Whether the standards of literature are declining may well be left an open question; we are probably no better able than our forebears to measure the contemporary against the past'. (p. 29.)

> 'But as soon as television comes into the possession of our neighbours—next door, in the next street, in another part of the country or even abroad—our own need for television begins to grow until in the end it becomes almost inescapable'. (p. 30.)

For the rest, the *Journal* is made up of snippets of news from various research bodies, some useful information about Primary School Records, some Surveys of Educational Research (so much of which seems to have been lifted from Mrs. Blackwell's recent *List of Researches in Education* 1918-1948, as is admitted, that one wonders why people for whom such a *Journal* is presumably intended could not be trusted to look at her book for themselves) and concludes with a number of reviews of mixed calibre.

I trust that these remarks will not be taken as an expression of a desire for mere fault-finding. No one would more have welcomed a *Journal* of such professed aims which had shown any capacity to live up to them than I would. But unless the *Journal* in subsequent numbers shows a vast improvement, it will remain one more indication of that profound malaise which seems to affect the educational world, the inability to produce any body of work which bears the mark of an educated mind.

G. H. BANTOCK.

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LIVES AND LETTERS: SOME RECENT GERMAN STUDIES

GERMAN LYRIC POETRY, by S. S. Prawer (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 25/-).

DIE NEUERE DEUTSCHE LYRIK, by A. Closs (Erich Schmidt Verlag, Berlin, DM. 5.70, bound DM. 7.60).

RAINER MARIA RILKE, by Hans Egon Holthusen (Studies in Modern European Literature and Thought, Bowes and Bowes, 6/-).

RAINER MARIA RILKE: HIS LIFE AND WORK, by F. W. van Heerikhuizen (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 25/-).

LETTERS TO MERLINE, 1919-1922, translated by Violet M. Macdonald (Methuen, 10/6).

FROM THE REMAINS OF COUNT C. W., by R. M. Rilke. The German text with an English Translation and Introduction by J. B. Leishman (The Hogarth Press, 8/6).

Mr. Prawer's *German Lyric Poetry* is an exercise in literary history and taste through *explication de texte*. He conducts a detailed critical analysis of nearly forty poems ranging from Klopstock to Rilke (they include six by Goethe, three by Heine, two by George and three by Rilke), relating them generously to other work and, sometimes over-simply, to the artistic and social conditions of their age. He starts from the fundamental difficulties of a teacher of poetry:

> 'It is only, if at all, through the actual experience of poetry that we can become convinced of its value. We must therefore begin by close reading of actual poems: in order to end, not with mere "information about" poetry, but with the capacity to respond to it more readily and more intelligently than before'.

His procedure, as the author remarks, is often elementary, for he has in mind a comparatively large and unsophisticated audience. Sometimes he throws a floodlight on what, even so, must be self-evident, but his exposition of the means whereby good poems *do* what they say is often cogent. Readers of this journal may be aware of a certain indebtedness in approach:

> 'If we prefer—as we surely must—Hölderlin's poem to that of Lenau, it is because the former achieves a poise which the latter lacks . . . Hölderlin's grief seems so much the stronger, so much the more genuine than that of Lenau, because he records *resistance* to it, an effort to contain it'.

(This comparison of *Herbstklage* with *Lebenslauf* is particularly instructive).

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Mr. Prawer does not entirely escape the dangers inherent in the method. At times he explains too much, or the commentary grows visibly interested in itself and he verges on a 'purple passage'. Thus his admiration for Hölderlin carries him away:

> ' "Der Weltsinn", "der Gebrauch"—these are not simply abstractions, they are *seen*, become a monstrous actuality crushing the lovers with the iron tread suggested by the rhythm; the tread which comes down three times on the word "andern", suggesting the remoteness of these monsters from the laws of true gods. Their law, their code, is "ehern". The word describes at once the nature and the object of the world's worship. It suggests on the one hand the juggernaut inexorability already noted; and on the other a worship of brute power, of heathen idols . . .'.

This finely lucid poem needs no such 'programme-music' notes.

Bröger's *Lied der Arbeit* is not worth analysing, even as a dreadful example of 'stock-response', and when Mr. Prawer—in his desire to approximate to historical continuity—examines Paul Heyse's *Treueste Liebe* as 'an epitome of Munich poetry at its worst'—

> Ein Bruder und eine Schwester,
> Nichts Treuers kennt die Welt *etc.*—

we feel that a lot of heavy artillery is being turned on a particularly frail butterfly:

> 'How obviously untrue to experience; how inappropriate the image to the main statement! We can all think of plenty of brothers and sisters who do not "go together as faithfully as earth and moon".'

No doubt such work has to be done. There is a place for it, and that the place is the lecture-room rather than a book suggests a possible source of irritation to the reader. For in front of an undergraduate audience, Mr. Prawer's technique, with his apt quoting from English writers, would be wonderfully effective and valuable.

A more serious criticism is that the method at times seems mechanically applied. Thus, of the mountain image of Rilke's *Ausgesetzt auf den Bergen* . . . Mr. Prawer remarks,

> 'the reader . . . finds himself *with* the poet, who points out to him the landscape of these heart-mountains.
>
> . . . Síehe, wie kléin dórt,
> Síehe . . .
>
> From heavy stress to heavy stress we seem, in these short phrases, to be climbing away, higher and higher . . .'

True enough. But it might be said of

> A bánner with the stránge devíce—
> Excélsiór!

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that it took the reader up the mountainside by laborious steps, ending with a triumphant scramble to the top. Mr. Prawer tends to stop short in his *explication*, so that the qualities that make for greatness in poetry, and the qualities that distinguish one great poem from another, are not always made clear.

But the most important aspect of this study is that the author is ready to indicate his preferences and those preferences are healthy and well defended. If he sometimes suffers the usual disadvantages of writing 'from the heart', then it is because he is not merely making an academic living. And if it is easy to parody the style and procedure, the fact remains that this book is a brave and stimulating attempt to fill a gap which more restrained and scholarly writers tactfully ignore and to which teachers commonly close their eyes—no matter how many of their students fall through it.

Professor Closs, in his account of the German lyric 'vom Barock bis zur Gegenwart', is under the necessity of giving a great deal of sheer information; yet he manages to include no small amount of textual analysis, and his habit of referring to specific poems gives his comments on an author's work a reality which is rarely present in literary surveys of this ambitious nature. The guiding principle of the book is salutary, and especially so in a history of this range and breadth—that every successful work of art obeys the laws (and only the laws) which it sets itself. Professor Closs is deeply concerned with the problem of 'inner form': the way in which 'content' and 'expression' merge into the one thing. We are reminded of Goethe's remark (quoted by Mr. Prawer): 'If the content of the *Roman Elegies* were propounded in the tone and the verse-form of Byron's *Don Juan*, what I have said there would sound quite depraved'. Professor Closs's frequent reference to other European literatures would do much to remove the persistent feeling that, outside a favoured and fashionable few, German lyric poetry is really rather provincial. Rilke is treated at greater length than any other individual writer, followed closely by Goethe ('Jede neue Generation, jeder Deutsche, ja jeder moderne Mensch muss sich seinen Goethe erst erringen'), Schiller and Klopstock; while considerable space is given to the work of Hölderlin, George and Trakl, and there is an extremely knowledgeable section on 'Gegenwartslyrik'. In a sense, this book and Mr. Prawer's complement each other; both deserve to be widely used.

. . . . .

Herr Holthusen's short study is an eminently healthy introduction (and more than that) to Rilke's later poetry. Implicitly it is one long rebuke to Herr van Heerikhuizen and others:

> 'Many of Rilke's ideas are apt to exercise a baneful influence on muddled minds, and certain lyrical and supremely harmonious cadences of his are as sweet poison to many poetasters'.

Herr Holthusen, who seems equipped to deal in philosophical fashion if he would, is a poet himself (he takes pride of place in Professor

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Closs's section on contemporary poets), and prefers to begin his investigation at the other end—with Rilke's handling of language:

> 'Rilke's new discoveries and inventions in the world of words amount to an unparalleled extension alike of sensibility and of the capacity for expression'.

This is an austere book which, in view of its size, restricts itself overmuch to technical analysis of verbal structure—often simple and valuable, as when *Sonnets to Orpheus*, II, vii, prompts the remark,

> 'The poem is a call to the object, to the thing, to unfold itself in language; and this effect is achieved by means of an intricate and delicate system of participle-constructions, small relative clauses and appositionally used nouns . . .'.

—less simple when phrases such as 'hypotactic development' and 'paratactic co-ordination' are employed. What Herr Holthusen says occasionally sounds more difficult—and less relevant—than it really is, but he writes lucidly when he comes to the topic which circumstances have made predominant in Rilke-criticism: the 'philosophy'. Rilke's myth, he writes, 'is ultimately a myth of the artist, of the aesthetic experience of man . . . the ideas of this orphic doctrine are pre-eminently "poetic" or rather "poetological" ideas . . . in fact an aesthetics of human existence'. (*Cf.* Closs: 'Rilkes Schau ist im Ästhetischen verankert . . .'). The significance of this definition will be indicated if we think of all the other terms which have been used where the word 'aesthetics' stands in that last phrase.

Pursuing the enemy into their own territory, Herr Holthusen states plainly,

> 'Once abstracted from the concrete liveliness of their metaphorical language, from their aesthetic context, and regarded as philosophical doctrine, Rilke's "ideas" are wrong'.

That can do with repetition; for the tendency in our age of self-conscious anxiety to look 'through' the metaphor instead of at it—as if it were an ever-thinning tissue paper around the gift of illumination and truth—does not seem to be decreasing. Very rightly, Herr Holthusen follows up with a careful, honest consideration of the implications:

> 'The mystery of the beautiful cannot be solved by conceptual thinking . . . On one hand we are entitled to challenge the poet as a bearer and propagator of ideas, on the other we must give up our critical attitude and humbly accept the beauty of his productions'.

Much remains to be discussed—and ultimately the reason why, because Rilke's myth is a myth of 'the aesthetic experience of man', it is more than that. But this little book marks out the boundaries within which exploration and speculation can be profitable.

Considering that Herr van Heerikhuizen's book is (he tell us) 'a testimony to a great emotion which, but for Rilke, would never

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have entered my life. For it arose from contact with one dead who for years had been more alive to me than many of the people around me', one is relieved to find it no worse than it is. The style (for which the English translators cannot be wholly responsible) robs it of any insidious power; it opens thus:

> 'The nineteenth century, shortly characterized, can be seen as a time of shattered structures, of centrifugal forces, of sharp contrasts in immediate juxtaposition'.

Moreover, the author makes no claim for Rilke as a systematic thinker and even admits, on the last page, that 'Rilke-adulation has its dangers'. Unfortunately one realizes that Herr van Heerikhuizen considers systematic thought a little vulgar and is far more interested in the kind of 'mysticism' which its presence would preclude. This book contains much portentous generalization about man and society and life, and a largely unhelpful and sometimes confusing commentary on Rilke's letters and poems (particularly the earlier ones), while the nearest we come to literary criticism is in this comment on the *Duino Elegies*:

> 'It is the drama of a soul which, in its perplexing wealth, consistency and purity, mysteriously became the mirror and pattern of cultural occurrence in its entirety'

—which is not very near.

Herr van Heerikhuizen's bias is indicated all too plainly in this statement:

> 'The life of Rainer Maria Rilke has not the appearance of a twentieth century life; it was lived in Biblical and Dantesque proportions. And is it not of such poets and of such men that our century has so great a need?'

It is quite true that Rilke's life has not the appearance of a twentieth century life: it hardly has the appearance of a life at all. It looks much more like a piece of poetry—frequently an inferior piece and, when it approaches what most of us think of as 'life', even distasteful.

Letters to Merline, which surely ought never to have been published, bear witness to this. They illustrate, with a wealth of painful detail, a remark of the Princess von Thurn und Taxis concerning Rilke which is quoted by Herr van Heerikhuizen—'how anxiously he has been asking whether I do not believe that somewhere exists a loving being, ready to withdraw the moment the voice calls? . . . The woman who gives her whole heart, while demanding nothing for herself—that is all he asks for!' 'Merline', unfortunately, could not quite manage to demand nothing, and the greater part of this correspondence is a protracted and irresolute fending-off—more tactfully, a 'postponement of love'—heavily disguised under layers of poeticality and sensitive feeling. Rilke's words flow with a shocking ease. Shocking because we realize that 'Merline', although herself a painter, simply wanted to live an ordinary kind of life, neither Biblical nor Dantesque. Shocking,

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too—even though we know how desperately Rilke needed solitude and freedom from responsibility, especially when he was 'waiting for' the 'voice' of the *Elegies*, and how well his withdrawal was rewarded—because of the lack of common humanity which his refined talents cannot always hide—

> 'And if like J . . . I admire you, like G . . . I fear for you, if you are taking morphia to make yourself sleep. My loving Friend, instead of that, put this letter on your eyes to serve them as eyelids . . .'.

These letters—'perhaps the most intimate and revealing which have yet been published', as Mr. Leishman describes them in his introduction—reveal what many of us would rather not see and what, in any case, lies outside the proper relationship between artist and audience. Even if we forget that they were written to a real woman, they contain nothing (except perhaps a perceptive technical comment on the 'great goddess' rhyme) which other letters do not give us, in a less ambiguous context. We knew already—and Rilke's marriage provided a forcible illustration—with what painful intensity he felt that 'the life of any man who has reached a certain point in his obligation to art, undergoes distortions which, in a certain direction, make him almost a maniac. One needs so much fearlessness in art itself that in other things the artist often shows a ridiculous pusillanimity'. And what should we say to this, if it had been written by anyone whose life and letters were less sacrosanct than Rilke's?—

> 'I still have the little handkerchief that was saturated with your tears; I carry it on me as a symbol that, on my heart, all your tears will be dried, always, Friend, all your tears . . .'.

'Er war kein Heiliger, kein "Seraphico",' Professor Closs says of Rilke, 'anderseits war er auch nicht nur der Meister der Nuance'. If the last book assures us of the former, the next may make us doubt the latter. *From the Remains of Count C. W.*, printed together with translations and an introductory essay by Mr. J. B. Leishman, is a piece of mystification, another meaty bone for the hungry devotee, The First Part of this cycle of poems came into being during November, 1920, and the Second Part during February, 1921, while Rilke, at Schloss Berg, was hoping for the *Duino Elegies* to complete themselves. Only one of the twenty-one pieces appeared (anonymously) in Rilke's lifetime, and the complete cycle was not published until 1950. Rilke disowned them: they had been 'dictated' to him, he insisted, by the ghost of a former inhabitant of the château, 'Count C. W.'. To Frau Wunderly-Volkart he wrote that the Count, as a poet, was 'often clumsy, often all-too-clever', though 'in some few "hits" he has gained my approval, even, to be honest, my envy'; and to Princess Marie von Thurn und Taxis that 'if most of it disappoints you (dilettantisms, banalities, etc.) just remember: *it's not me*'. Yet so much of the writing is peculiarly *typical*. Why, then, this reluctance to put his name to it?

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Mr. Leishman, who considers these poems 'among the most beautiful, and . . . the most characteristic, that he ever wrote', favours Herr Dieter Bassermann's 'elaborate and subtle explanation' (*Der späte Rilke*)—in short that, ashamed of his failure to bring off the *Elegies*, Rilke invented 'Count C. W.' to bear the responsibility for what arrived instead:

> 'The chief merit of this hypothesis is that it enables us to regard Rilke's attempt to dissociate himself from these poems, not as the result of a total rejection of their style and tone and content, but as the result of an almost immediate recognition that they were not what had really been required of him, not what he ought to have been writing at that particular time: that they were, in fact, the record of what had been in some sort an escape from his real task'.

Though we have learnt to respect Mr. Leishman's opinion and to value all his work in this field, it seems to me that Rilke may have had a less 'subtle' reason for disclaiming the *Remains*, and a better one. In the *Sonnets to Orpheus* style and content are at one, but *both* are present; in the *Remains* what is overwhelmingly present is style, 'manner', very nearly in a void—'Count C. W.', with all Rilke's verbal technique at his ghostly fingertips, is saying very little. He is, indeed, 'all-too-clever', dangerously so, since here and there we have the impression that what we are reading is a remarkably clever parody of Rilke's characteristic use of words, brackets, dots and dashes. Thus, I, iv—

> Statt zu reiten, Olga, statt zu jagen,
> kniet ich bei dir, *während jeder ging*
> *kniet ich*, Seidenes um mich geschlagen,
> das von deiner Gnade niederhing
>
> (While they rode or hunted, I was kneeling
> there beside you, Olga; while they all
> took themselves away, I knelt on, feeling
> round me there your favour's silken shawl)[1]

—the italicized repetition, with its air of whispered portentousness—as if to say, 'now this is very fine feeling, though only the *élite* will understand'—reminds us uncomfortably of passages in the contemporaneous *Letters to Merline*. A reference in I, vi,

> hat mich ein im Tod getrübter
> Knabe nahe angeweint?

---

[1]Mr. Leishman seems less at ease in this volume than in his other translations. It is as if he had found little to get his teeth into but insubstantial verbal devices, mannerisms and 'significant' gestures—which he consequently tends to exaggerate, for 'Count C. W.' was too clever for 'imbueder . . . reneweder' and 'the lief down-lier' to be fair translations of what he actually wrote ('eingeflösster . . . grösster' and 'das willig Liegende', I, ix and x).

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(was it some in death desponding
boy imploring me for aid?)

is a rather debilitated variation on a theme which is used magnificently elsewhere, and calls to mind the sentimental decadence of Rilke's early writing (Rilke told Kippenberg that when to his surprise he found himself reciting one of these pieces, he said 'But these sentimental verses cannot be yours!').

The lines in I, ix,

denn der Tod war nie der Antipode
dessen, was sich hier dem Schein

dieser Sonne gab und ihn begehrte . . .

(death was never the uncompromising
opposite of that which here became

wholly to this earthly sun converted . . .)

state explicitly what in so many other places is *involved in* poetry, and there is a sense of anti-climax about its sheer nakedness, something which almost amounts to giving the game away. Similarly we might suspect a light-hearted self-mockery in I, v—

Kummer?—Tante, oh, ihr hattet ihn!
Und ihr littet gut—, ihr wart nicht weichlich

(Trouble?—oh, great-aunt, you had it too!
And the strength to bear it you could muster).

While two lines of II, x, might seem to be parody of the finest, wickedest kind—Mephistopheles putting his finger on the very point where the sublimely difficult becomes the easily ridiculous—

Im Halse des Erstickten ist die Gräte
so einig mit sich selber wie im Fisch

(The fishbone in the throat it suffocated
is quite as much at home as in the fish).[2]

Moreover, the reference to the gates at Karnak in I, vii—

Und jetzt, für unser ganzes Leben,
die Säule—: jene! War es nicht genug?

(And then, for a whole life-time's meditation
did not the Column bring enough and more?)

---

[2]Mr. Leishman's reference to these lines encourages me to disagree with his general estimate of the collection: 'a friend of mine rightly remarked, when he first read them, that were they to be recovered in some remote future as a fragment of our atomised civilization, they would be sufficient in themselves to prove that at some time during the twentieth century an incomparable poet had been alive'. It is true, though, that great parody usually implies greatness in its victim.

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—though Rilke says nothing about 'meditation', bears a closer resemblance to a common tourist observation than to a saying of the 'unsayable' if we take it on its own merits and without bringing in the Egyptian appearances of the *Sonnets* and *Elegies*. Yet this is an attractive poem, if rather superficial and slack by Rilke's own standards,[3] and it contains some excellent lines—

> Zerstörung gab ihr recht: dem höchsten Dache
> war sie zu hoch. Sie überstand und trug
> Ägyptens Nacht
>
> (Ruin vindicated it: it would have been
> too high for highest roof. It stood and bore
> Egyptian night).

For it is true that this collection varies considerably in quality, within the same poem and between one poem and another. My own impression is that they are in fact 'remains'—remnants from those other works which the poet had created, or was to create, at red heat. There are some impressive passages, and brilliant images, as in the stanza on music, II, xi:

> Ach, du auch weisst am Ende nur zu rühmen,
> gekrönte Luft, was du uns schön versagt
>
> (You too at last are only celebrating,
> crowned air, what you so beautifully conceal).

This poem, indeed, would not be out of place among the *Sonnets to Orpheus*. But to re-read the *Sonnets* directly after this cycle is a cheering, as well as necessary, exercise: the cogwheels which the *Remains* display in all their gyrating virtuosity fall unobtrusively into their proper places, style is married to content, and the self-consciously 'unsayable' gets itself said quite decently. This contrast of shadow with substance reassures us that at his best Rilke is solid, flesh and blood, human, after all.

'Rilke-adulation' has reached that state of frenzy in which it cannot fail to cut its own throat. There are clear signs that a reaction against the poet has set in, and one is tempted to applaud it. We have to remind ourselves, therefore, that the *Letters to Merline* were not intended for publication and that, by Rilke's account, the *Remains* were the property of 'Count C. W.'—and, more important, that Riike himself wrote the *Elegies* and *Sonnets* and a good many other poems, for publication and free from mystification.

D. J. ENRIGHT.

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[3]In the letter to Frau Wunderly-Volkart, written directly after the composition of the First Part, he says, 'No, to speak seriously, I couldn't understand what it was up to, this trifling,—it was charming and its charm led me on—(incidentally the whole thing was the work of three days and done like knitting—I imagine) . . .'.

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